

spare Rib

A Women's Liberation
Magazine May 1977
no 58 30 Pence

"The most
fantastic day of
my life."

Women's Liberation '77
on the spot reports

A Girl's
Best Friend
isher best friend

Striking at Yardley's &
Trust Houses Forte

U.S. Birth Control clinic
firebombed

Researching cervical
cancer

Plus: reviews letters fiction

HISTORY? HERSTORY?



**SOME PEOPLE THINK HISTORY IS ABOUT KINGS AND QUEENS
AND POPULAR HEROES**

**SOME PEOPLE THINK HISTORY IS ABOUT EXPLOITATION, OPPRESSION
AND CLASS CONFLICT**

SOME PEOPLE THINK THEY ARE INSEPARABLE

Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology now offers a BA Honours Degree in Modern History commencing in October 1977.

Topics covered include the Commune, the development of Socialist Thought, Working Class Movements in 19th Century Britain, the Mexican Revolution, the destruction of the Weimar Republic, the Film and War, and the making of Modern Ireland.

Honours degree courses are also available in Geography, Modern Languages, Humanities/Social Studies, English and Joint Honours (Science).

Applications can be made to CCAT as well as to UCCA. Further details and application forms from Catherine Hepworth, Room D270, Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, Cambridge CB1 2AJ. Telephone (0223) 63271 Ext. 142.

P 523 / 344

spare Rib

is produced by a collective who decide together what goes into the magazine. It is read and produced by women who are very involved with Women's Liberation, but we are also committed to reaching women who have had no previous contact with the Women's Liberation Movement. We want to do this without losing sight of what feminist politics are all about.

We feel that the magazine needs more articles that discuss basic questions of women's oppression and women's liberation. At the moment it tends to be very informational and sometimes the ideas and differences of opinion get a bit lost.

We think that "discussion" articles on topics like dealing with everyday sexism, romance and marriage, lesbianism, how our awareness of women's oppression shapes what actions we take, would affect all Spare Rib readers.

WE'D LIKE TO HEAR FROM YOU.

Please keep your articles to not more than 2,000 words. Regretfully we can't pay contributors nor can we publish everything sent in. It's perhaps best to send us a letter outlining your ideas so we can discuss them, or you can ring us if you'd like to talk first. Please include an s.a.e. with all contributions.

Features

- 6 Women's Liberation '77 "The most fantastic day of my life" and "Why I won't be coming next year". What went on at the National Women's Liberation Conference – the only time in the year that so many feminists are together and you get a sense of the Movement as a whole.
- 36 A Girl's best friend . . . is her best friend? Young girls in Birmingham compare their relationships with boys and with each other

News

- 19 Researching cervical cancer – report from Manchester . . . US birth control clinic firebombed . . . Striking at Yardley's and Trust Houses Forte . . . Woman builder sacked for swearing . . . Women's TUC – "the means to fight against discrimination"? . . . and lots more

Fiction

- 33 A Week Like Any Other Part 6 in our serialisation of the diary of a young Russian mother

Reviews

- 41 Film: Peckinpah's castrating women, and *About Time* by the London Women's Film Group
Theatre: A new play from Michelene Wandor, and Counteract's *Double Shift*
Exhibitions: *The World As We See It*, and *Women at War 1914-18* the official view
Books: Biographies of Eleanor Marx and Natalie Barney, and a popular feminist Irish novel. For children – facing slavery after *Roots*

Regulars

- 4 Letters A nun's life . . . 'Working Woman' fantasies
- 17 Tooth and Nail more food for fury
- 30 Classifieds
- 47 Subscriptions – we're nearly five!

Spare Rib is produced collectively by Rose Ades, Anny Brackx, Alison Fell, Victoria Green, Sue Hobbs, Gabriel Mills, Jane Prince, Linda Phillips, Laura Margolis, Jill Nicholls, Rozsika Parker, Michele Roberts, Eleanor Stephens.

Please send a stamped addressed envelope with all unsolicited manuscripts and letters if you want an acknowledgement. Spare Rib cannot be held responsible for loss or damage of manuscripts.

Copyright here and abroad in all news, feature articles and photographs is held jointly by Spare Ribs Ltd and the author.

Reproduction in whole or in part of any article is forbidden without the express permission of Spare Ribs Ltd and the author.

Spare Rib is published by Spare Ribs Limited, 27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.

Telephone 01-253 9792.

Printed by Carlisle Web Offset Limited, Newtown Trading Estate, Carlisle CA2 7NR.

Typeset by Caroline MacKechnie.

Distributed by Moore Harness Limited, 31 Corsica Street, London N5. ISBN 0306 7971.

letters

Letters about Simone de Beauvoir's remark on 'frigidity' (SR 56) will appear in next month's Spare Rib

*indicates a letter abbreviated

Our Wholeness Together

Dear *Spare Rib*,
In her letter about "women only" events (SR 56), Sheila Miller gives the unfortunate impression that her feminist consciousness excludes an awareness that we as women have been for centuries and *still are* oppressed by men. While I admit there are men today who do understand something of feminism, it is a contradiction in terms ever to suppose a man can be a feminist. Thus, why is it unreasonable for there to be a number of events for women only at which we, as women, can enjoy each other's company away from the watchful eyes of men?

A few "women only" events are surely an indication and recognition of the positive nature of women's company. It is, as Sheila says, "our" struggle and not theirs. Then let us at least do some things on our own so that we can develop a sense of our wholeness without the "support" of men.

As a white person, I cannot by definition take part in a black revolution whose aim is to take away my power and privileges over blacks (however much I support such a revolution). A feminist revolution is a threat to male power, and it is a contradiction for men to participate; and to make our revolution we women must begin by taking ourselves seriously as women distinct from men. I'm not pushing separatism as a way of life (that's another argument again), but I'm very aware of the need to take time out from a male world — if only now and then — in order to learn how to take ourselves seriously as women and to stand on our own feet. Women only events are simply one of the limited number of opportunities we have to start getting this together. And, come on, they are nice aren't they?!

Towards sisterhood

Julie Saj
London E8

Happy to Serve

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was very interested in Michele Roberts' article on the effects of her Catholic girlhood (SR 54), but it's not the whole truth, you know. I too am the daughter of a Catholic mother and a Protestant father, I too was educated in a convent school and brought up a Catholic, but in my case it has brought great happiness, peace and fulfilment. I became a nun 25 years ago, when I was 22, so I know what I am talking about. I have had a really happy and interesting life, and most of the nuns I have known during all these years are really wonderful

and often quite remarkable women.

For centuries, nuns have organised their own lives, conducting their own affairs, serving the poor, the sick, the elderly in numerous ways in every country in the world, not by hating or rejecting their brothers, but by loving them and serving them in Christ.

Nuns are virgins, not because they hate men or because they are afraid of them, but because they follow Christ utterly and entirely, and want to serve *everyone* for his sake. They are happy in their single lives because this is their vocation. They do not *reject* marriage, but they have chosen to follow the single state because they give their whole love to Christ, and want to serve all people without distinction of sex, race, colour or creed.

I think the women's liberation movement could well be interested in this great and ancient movement of "sisters" — the oldest feminist movement in the world. We desire the honest advancement of women in all countries and we work for this, but we do not think it will be attained by the denial of woman's basic nature.

Please don't judge us by what the media says about us. Judge us by the facts. In this country alone there are over ten thousand nuns engaged in nursing, caring for the elderly, the very poor, immigrants, besides doing jobs like teaching and social work. We are happy to serve.

Michele Roberts had a very unhappy experience, but I do not think it is at all typical. I would say that my own experience (though far less newsworthy) is more common.

Yours faithfully
Sister Catherine (Appleby)
La Retraite Convent, Bristol 8

Not Just For Trendies . . .

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
The message is — thanks for being the most informative, amusing and encouraging magazine around.

A few months back I actually took out a subscription — having had to search the newsgagents ever since leaving London, and often being disappointed once I did find a copy. I began to feel that like the rest of the press, everything you printed was for trendy city-dwellers — so you could say the sub was a sort of trial, even though I'd been a regular reader for years when I was in London.

Anyway, I haven't been disappointed at all. From the article on Babysitting (SR 51), not a month has gone by without something that's interesting and relevant. My lifestyle has changed so much in the last couple of years I wondered if I was really out of

touch but you've reminded me (and keep on reminding me) that the women's movement is something we can all be part of in everything we do.

Michele Roberts' article on her Catholic girlhood (SR 54) — well where do I start? Surely I knew you at school Michele? — or is the convent school experience such that any ex-convent school girl must feel she knows you and the experiences you describe. At first I was angry, then sad, and finally had to acknowledge your courage in confronting the oppressions of a Catholic upbringing — it's more than I could do, although I have tried to overcome them often enough. I don't agree with all you say but I'd like to see the final paragraph printed in every Catholic classroom in the country! Thanks.
Yours in sisterhood
Kate Enright
Southampton

"Mysterious Dark Hole"

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
I was interested to read Linda Dove's report on self-help health clinics in Los Angeles (SR 55). I had just had my first encounter with self-help health in Brussels and I think it's worth discussing some of the issues which meet women when they first come across self-help health.

For a start, it's quite an experience to see the inside of your own or someone else's vagina for the first time. Most women are attracted by the idea of doing so, and are delighted to examine their "mysterious dark hole" and get to know their own body. But some are very reluctant. I know women who have suffered horribly at the hands of gynaecologists without vowing to get together with other women in a self-help group.

At a meeting of Women Overseas for Equality, based in Brussels, three women, Lucy, Rhoda and Genevieve, came from Paris to talk to us about the group they'd established three years ago. They showed us slides of the cervixes of different women, of a breast examination and of the speculum and other instruments. Then each of them unselfconsciously whipped their pants off, sat down comfortably on a pile of cushions and showed us how to insert the speculum, urging us to use the torch to see what a cervix looks like in real life. I admired their courage, for we were not only strangers, but also inexperienced in this kind of thing, and they couldn't know what our reactions would be. In fact no-one overreacted, but I sensed that we were all fascinated and also a little on the defensive. After the meeting 26 speculums were sold, so people were clearly interested, but no-one was keen enough to start a group where examinations could be done together.

I think the groups — as opposed to the clinics — are not so much an alternative as a welcome addition to traditional medical care. You are examining yourself as a healthy woman, whereas doctors more

often than not see illness, infection and malfunctioning. In the groups you learn the significance of changes in your own natural state, not in comparison with some mythical "normal woman". And the shared information can let you know what really is normal; for example, the operation some women have to realign a "tipped uterus" is unnecessary, since many women have uteruses which lean backwards or forwards. Indeed, pelvic examinations show that the uterus changes position from time to time.

However, knowing the advantages of self-help doesn't necessarily dispel fears which some women have about its safety. Compared with the average doctor, women tend to treat themselves and each other with extraordinary care when using the speculum or doing pelvic examinations. The famous "low pain threshold" has little justification: the pain is usually caused by rough treatment or by the tenseness which accompanies our anxieties at entering the doctor's surgery — unless there really is something wrong, of course. Pain is rarely experienced in the relaxed atmosphere of a self-help group.

Knowing our own bodies, in however amateur a fashion, is one more way of showing that we know what we want and are determined to get it.

Keep printing,
Best Wishes
Alison Maitland
Brussels, Belgium

'Working Woman' Fantasies

*Dear *Spare Rib*,
While I agree with some of the points raised by the Girton Feminist Reading Group (SR 57) — that of the danger of self-diagnosis in particular — I found their sweeping generalisations about the 'working woman' somewhat disturbing. Although I fall into that category myself, and have a family, I do not find myself forced to use convenience food, as they suggest, nor to wear tights, and rush to my GP every time I get thrush. Organic or wholefood is often cheaper than so-called convenience food, so I feed myself and my family on a diet which contains most of the things listed in the thrush article (SR 54).

What disturbs me is that the Girton Feminist Reading Group should use their assumptions about people like myself, of whom they would appear to have very little actual knowledge, to justify their criticisms of your article. If their comments were based on personal experience — fair enough, but I find their fantasies about my/our way of life rather sad, and far more insulting than the "wording and style" of your article.

Yours sincerely
Fran Kennedy
Cambridge

Tough Guys Don't Talk

Dear *Spare Rib*,
I just felt I wanted to write and

thank you for the article on play (SR 56). Until recently I worked as a playleader in Salford in a variety of play situations including the setting up of an adventure playground.

I found it helpful and reassuring to hear about other women who'd had the same experiences as mine, where sexism rules OK! Unfortunately not all female workers are prepared to question their situation, but are content to be shunted off into corners with the toddlers while the men do the "work".

This makes it doubly difficult to carve out a role as a woman when quite often we are physically weaker or smaller than many of the kids — it's not unusual to be knocked over — and "work" is defined as digging holes, but talking to the kids is only "standing around wasting time". It also follows that unless the kids see a different type of relationship between the workers then they'll behave in the same way themselves.

It's so true that the teenage girls suffer the most, and in an area where sex roles are very clearly defined from birth and there is no statutory provision for girls at all — they aren't allowed to join the Salford Lads Brigade! — it's very difficult to know where to start.

Many of the girls were interested in starting a girls' club if we could have borrowed premises, but I had to leave before we could get going. Only one of the horror hazards of Job Creation Schemes! Jill Barnett Manchester 19.

Squeezing Through Customs

Dear Spare Rib, I'm enclosing a subscription renewal form (for my fourth year!). I put it in a plain envelope without any mention of SR because, as you know, it has recently been banned by our Censorship Board and I was afraid my subscription might be confiscated on the way out of the country. I don't think the banning here will make much difference anyway as very few newsagents ever stocked it. I think quite a few people have subs though judging from the number of letters from Ireland which appear in your columns.

How about an occasional article on women in the Republic — there have been quite a few about the north now — we're still suffering from all sorts of archaic laws down here. *Spare Rib* is the greatest thing to happen for women since the pill. Long may they both squeeze through the Customs! A sister Dublin

Nice One

★Dear Spare Rib On behalf of the eight women who were on strike at T H Nice (SR 56) I would like to thank you for the coverage you gave us.

In the end we did win our claim for equal pay which resulted in

some of the lower paid women receiving increases of between £7-8 per week. Unfortunately this resulted in us losing some of our back pay (the increase should have been from October 76) but at least we have set a precedent for the future.

On a different subject I find it impossible to get *Spare Rib* in Bury St Edmonds and I wonder if you do subscriptions by post? Yours fraternally Sue Austin Bury St Edmonds, Suffolk

We've sent Sue a subscription form. Readers often write to say they have difficulty in obtaining copies. It would help us tremendously if anybody who finds it difficult to buy *Spare Rib* could write to Mary. Please give your name, address, telephone number and, if possible, the name and address of the particular newsagent's where you had problems.

Neutralised Anger

Dear Spare Rib, Rosemary May, who wrote defending the employment of feminists by the Job Creation Scheme (SR 57), appears to have missed the point which Paula Jennings and Maureen Watson so rightly made (SR 56). The direct employer may well be the Glasgow Women's Liberation Group but behind them are the Manpower Services Commission who hold the money and hence the power over those jobs.

This was not the only point of the letter however. It also dealt with the inherent problems of the situation where one or two women have the time and money to be able to devote their energies to the women's movement and therefore, regardless of whether they want it or not, are in a position of power in that group. They have the time and facilities which are not available to other women and become in command of more knowledge about what is happening and are in a situation to control.

I think the original letter raised a very important issue, which requires consideration by everyone in the women's liberation movement. The employment of women as feminists is just one more example of how acceptable the movement has become. It is about time we started questioning what is happening to the movement which should be posing a real threat to patriarchal society. It is obvious that this is not happening. The movement is no longer threatening the basis of society and is therefore acceptable as a liberal campaigning body which men can afford to support because it does not threaten their position. Instead the anger and oppression of women is being used by men, and the movement is being neutralised.

In sisterhood Franki Raffles Fife, Scotland

Rights — Part of the Deal

Dear Spare Rib, I was really upset to read in the editorial of SR 57 that there had

been talk of leaving the word 'liberation' off the poster advertising the Women's Liberation Conference, and realised it was time to air a bit more openly the problems, and possibly resentments, that have built up recently over the relationship between 'women's rights' and 'women's liberation'. I am writing this letter before the conference takes place, and I hope there will be discussion on the subject there.

As you said in the editorial last month, we now have "more organisations taking up women's issues, like abortion and equal pay, being careful to refer to them as Women's Rights rather than Women's Liberation". I'm one of the people who is working (as a non-lawyer) in 'Women's Rights', as NCCL's women's rights officer, and I know what you mean about "being careful" — I think many people actually do believe that the two terms are synonymous and interchangeable, and use 'Women's Rights' when they want to sound 'respectable'. This shows, unfortunately, just how successful the media has been in scaring people away from the term 'women's liberation' with the ridiculing abbreviations of 'women's lib' and 'women's libbers'.

But the main point I want to make is that women's liberation is far more than the sum total of women's rights. Women's rights is part of women's liberation — an important part, but only part. A woman from the German Democratic Republic once told me that in her country women were as equal as they could possibly be, in terms of their rights, i.e. the law, the theory, because the GDR places much importance on the equality of the sexes. But she went on to say that having all the rights they needed was still not enough for the women of the GDR, and that they still saw the need (in fact more so than ever) to organise an independent women's movement "to tackle all the rest", as she put it. Women's liberation is still to be struggled for, even after the 'formal' winning of equality through equal rights.

That, of course, doesn't alter the fact that rights too have to be fought for, here and now. And the process of struggling for rights in our society will itself convince many people that rights alone are not enough, and will win their commitment to, and understanding of, women's liberation. It's not that 'rights' come first, then 'women's liberation'. Rights are part of the whole deal. It's the attitude to the struggle for rights that counts — i.e. our consciousness as feminists fighting for women's liberation — that makes all the difference and links the two.

This means that the term 'women's rights' is not, or at least, should not, be simply a watering down of the phrase 'women's liberation', or a respectable way of putting it. Women's rights is the proper way of expressing a particular field of activity, which involves

people already committed to women's liberation over and above the rights side of it, as well as people who are striving to win certain rights for their own sake, outside of any wider political framework or consciousness. It is up to those of us who already have the commitment to women's liberation to make sure that the "rights for rights sake" approach never gets left unchallenged or undeveloped. And it's up to us always to maintain a feminist (and I would argue that that must mean socialist too) perspective on the struggles which might seem for the moment to be merely pragmatic, dry, legal, limiting, if we neglect to put them in their full context.

In sisterhood, Jean Coussins London N1

Housework — Why Wages?

Dear Spare Rib, I have been a reader of your magazine for over two years now. Being from a Third World country, and moreover from an island as small as Jamaica, I have felt very much of an "onlooker" on the European and metropolitan women's movement. For the first time, however, it seems that something fundamentally relevant to all of us is on the stage. This is the question of Wages for Housework.

The following comments are in response to a letter from Ms. Lyle which appeared in SR 54. The letter attempts to discredit the idea of Wages for Housework. In answer I would like to say:

- 1 That it is time women were paid for producing, nurturing and servicing the labour power which is the most important element in the productive process.
- 2 That whether we provide Cordon Bleu meals or simply stave off starvation is something regulated by capital, which exploits our labour in such a way that *most of us can only think in terms of staving off starvation*.
- 3 The only thing which will improve this is the struggle we wage against the exploitation of our labour. This is true for all workers, and doubly true for us, the unpaid ones.
- 4 Wages for Housework is the beginning of liberation from housework. It will form the basis for women to make a choice. It will

Continued on page 38



Women's Liberation 1977

The National Women's Liberation Conference is the only time in the year that so many feminists are together and you get a sense of the movement as a whole. For this year's conference, April 2–3, we used the City of London Poly. Three thousand women discussed in small groups (workshops), danced to women's music and on Sunday brought ideas to a mass meeting.

Spare Rib 'interviewed' some women before they went home and invited everyone there to write down their impressions.

Here they are — not comprehensive, but a selection of what we received.

Stronger than before...

Carol Riddell (Liverpool)

Ten of us in the van, threading our way through the lorries and the showers down the motorway, high in anticipation, driving doesn't seem to tire. It's my sixth conference, so I know something of what's coming; know I'll get speedy. Once there, though, it's stronger than before. "Hello... (hug)... how are you... what you been doing... must spend some time together... see you... Hello... Hello." Have to hold close to Anne in the loo, a bundle of tension. Talking till four is natural in such an atmosphere, but gives the speed a fatigue base in the morning. Of course, the kids would run off and get lost, so we have to search miles down the Holloway Road. Them finally creched, plunge down more miles of corridor into the Saturday announcements.

How do you decide among so many workshops? It's got to be consciousness

raising though, first, 'cause that's where it's at for me. No change in capitalist patriarchy outside unless my head is changing too. If you think you've got the answers, sister, you're the one that needs it most. Numbers swell and we split into two; other Liverpool group are next door. What! We're beset by a politico and by social workers. The room copes with the politico. No, sister, you don't have to have the ideology right first — show me someone who's got the right ideology anyway — you have to start from where you're at — you, not them, you. But we don't do so well with the social workers. Suddenly we're not talking about *us*, but *them*, those poor, inarticulate women in the refuges, who don't have the benefits of our linguistic training to be able to raise their consciousness, how can I make them understand what it's about? Hey, worry about your own head, what's fucking you up, you'll find then you can make a real relationship, don't have to be a patronising do-gooder. Guilt and duty, guilt and duty, guilt and duty — terror weapons of reaction inside our heads. If it doesn't happen from love and energy,

we're social workers, or part of the dead left, no matter what we call ourselves... But they won't stop, going on about them instead of themselves. Get more and more angry inside, hold it in, coward, leave feeling bad. Other groups have done better, it seems. Imagine that you were a tree, what kind of picture of yourself would you draw? Is that just reactionary self-indulgence? Can't you see what it means?

There is Anny. Dare we take space to talk, go out to a pub for a bit? We're away, opening up to each other again, beginning to work through the distances — feels so good... It suddenly becomes apparent that the conference food has been prepared with the Liverpool Women and Gluttony Group in mind. And even something for the carnivores. On Sunday, noticing the way the huge piles of ham have diminished, it is clear that vegetarianism has not yet totally taken over the movement... Viv, holding creche-antipathetic son, spins webs of sound over jamming group on three chords in the bar area. I ought to go to Women in East Europe, I know quite a bit about





ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)

that, but I want to go to Need for Revolutionary Feminism... Fuck ought, so it's follow the masses to stop the liberal takeover. It doesn't take long, though, to find out I was right first time. By the time I've been told that men control the reproductive system, and the fruits of reproduction (i.e. kids) and that we need a Kapital of revolutionary feminism, I realise I've discovered a new version of a left group, and I had quite enough years of that! So it's off to East Europe after all, where sisters from Hungary and Germany tell us interesting things about women in their countries.

It's back to the left to discuss the two International Feminist-Socialist conferences, as Sandra put it, Amsterdam (for Feminist socialists) and Paris (for Socialist feminists), if you know which comes first. I remember a planning meeting in November and the hard-line Paris women apeing their male comrades in their put down of bourgeois feminism (anyone who wasn't in their tendency), but now the IMG and SWP sisters are all sweetness and light, wooing the uncommitted; we didn't want a split; it's a terrible thing;

everybody should come (to Paris); we don't want to produce a programme there for the European Women's Movement, only a weeny little statement; if only the Amsterdam sisters weren't so *sectarian*; there aren't really any differences between us at all. Almost moved to tears, I suddenly remember that the Paris conference has a line for you to agree with, and the Amsterdam one is open, whatever you think the relationship between socialism and feminism might be. As the Dutch sisters put it, "Fuck anyone who tries to tell us what marxism is about." But at least it's lively, and we go off to wrestle for a drink.

And so to a kaleidoscope of sounds and movement, and women space and women energy. Eyes shut, the rhythms of Terry Quaye beat inside me, and inside and outside merge, as her drums speak and lilt. Manchester Women's music group play reggae and blues, that all of us could do, demystifying performance. And Jam Today show what women *can* do, rocking us, tight as any professional group, to feminist music, 2000 of us, together in snakes and circles in total female

self-sufficiency.

After sleep and a bath, Sunday is calmer. The advertised workshops seem non-existent, but Anne and I miraculously meet, and there is half an hour together, wandering the bookstalls, which means that my day *must* be good. I hate plenary sessions, and tune into this one from the bar area via video, but an attempt to commit the women's movement to a socialist feminist line sends me, a feminist socialist, scurrying into the hall, determined to risk all and speak, if necessary. But Angela does the job, we all vote not to vote, so it's all right...

Feeling out of place...

Teesside Women's Action Group

We did not feel free to express ourselves as we really are. One sister said she was tempted to go in disguise, knowing the clothes she usually wears would be out of place, because like all W.Lib conferences,

we felt we were entering another world, which although colourful, and stimulating, is so different from ours. We feel oppressed as mothers, workers, wives, and we noticed there wasn't a workshop for one-parent families, or on motherhood — though there were many one-parent families/mothers at the conference.

However we did (as good middle class women) conform to the norms and prevailing culture of the weekend. We could; many women would have found it diffi-

cult. Our own efforts to conform restricted us. One sister said there was no place for a quiet, shy person to contribute.

Workshops were often too large, and sometimes there wasn't anyone responsible for running them.

We were impressed by the way certain groups of women appear to have overcome their inhibitions about their bodies. We admired their confidence. This is more difficult for us to attain, cut off

from the centres of women's lib like London.

One of the strangest events of the weekend was when one of our sisters, while waiting to go to the toilet, found herself in the middle of a raging argument about whether Durex machines should be installed in Ladies Toilets. She found herself having to explain to another sister standing by, what the product was for.

IMPORTANT ISSUES RAPE

Emma Wheelwright (London)

"If enough of us organise together, in small groups, then our anger will become visible in the streets" . . . We were talking about rape, its link with sexist images of women, and how to fight both. "Rape is a conscious process of intimidation by which all men keep all women in a state of fear and powerlessness." (Brownmiller)

There were over a hundred of us in a huge resounding hall; one group discussed parliamentary change, another rape crisis centres and in mine we talked about how to overcome our fears and powerlessness and where, how, when to hit back.

Lots of suggestions were shouted escalating from leafletting cinemas, intensive sticker and poster campaigns to more drastic action against rapists. Plans were made and advice and warnings given: "It's very important to know exactly what you're doing and with whom; also make sure you know your rights . . ."

We felt it made sense to try and formulate a motion which could be considered as a seventh demand of the Women's Liberation Movement. The motion which demanded an end to rape and all forms of sexual coercion as well as support for women taking retaliatory action, provoked quite a stir in the mass meeting: we need to discuss what rape means — retaliation against who and how — why not include all violence against women — even if you beat a rapist you'll be done over by the courts — rape is a very complex issue; it's to do with the whole of society, not just about individual men. There was not enough time to discuss the issue fully and the meeting decided to think about it for a year. . . which does not mean that we cannot act . . .

CLASS

Working Class Women's Liberation Group (London)

Many working class women realise that through our contact with the Women's Liberation Movement we have access to

new skills, ideas, etc. We see this as positive; a good education, however you define it, should be available to all of us. But as soon as we begin to use the facilities of the Women's Liberation Movement we are told we are middle class. This makes us invisible and allows the middle class women, who dominate the movement, to go on saying that we're all middle class. It's a way of keeping power. Also middle class women expect us to adopt their 'culture', before we can use those facilities. We object to the assumption that everything middle class is better than everything working class. That perpetuates the male class system within the movement.

Middle class women must begin to understand and criticise their own attitudes and standards.

In our workshops on classism there were working class women from all over Britain, and of all ages, with different kinds of education. A lot of us talked about the confusion of being in a movement that has tried to cut us off, perhaps unconsciously, from our backgrounds and our experience. We want classism talked about — but we don't only want talk, we want change.

Three women, two in Big Flame (Liverpool)

Vera: I've never been to one of these in my life — just to see so many women together is great. It's broadened my mind. I live on an estate on the outskirts of town — I'd come again. You feel like you've got someone behind you when you see this — I've just started living alone with my kids and I don't feel so lost any more.

I got that drunk last night, it was more excitement really. It's not like when you go down the pub with all the fellas staring — I felt really relaxed. It's brought me out a bit — I used to freeze when anyone talked to me.

Agnes: Three of the workshops I went to were around working class issues. I feel Women's Liberation is progressing. It's getting broader, people are willing to talk about class now too.

Jill: The 'How dare you assume I'm middle class' workshop was supposed to be for working class women only, but it didn't really go into problems of being working class without an education. It was mainly women who've had middle class education but working class backgrounds and don't know where they are now. I was a bit upset by that, I didn't

really feel I could join in.

Vera: One girl got upset because she didn't know what class she was and someone said: "that's your problem" and she ran out.

Agnes: I think women in the women's movement are feeling a bit stagnant and want to break out.

Vera: I was shitting myself before I came, looking for all kinds of excuses. But now I'd love to see more women from my street come. Some of them got scared of me because I was going round with the Big Flame girls — they thought I had all the answers.

Jill: It's not a question of what's the best way to get 'ideas' across to working class women like some people here think — it's not that we're ignorant or stupid, all we need on say abortion are facts.



**I'M A
WORKING
CLASS
WOMAN
+OK.**



Older women's workshop — 'this was the only issue that sparked off new thought for me'

Agnes: What are people in the women's movement for — is it some kind of clique that it's nice to be in? It's to fight to liberate all women isn't it? I wouldn't dream of going to yoga, or consciousness-raising, or music — I think they're rubbish. In the struggle today those things are irrelevant. What do working class people know about music? And if you're a housewife with five kids you've no time to do yoga. I'd like to see the 10,000 who march about abortion marching about gas, rent, food, fuel. I'd drag anyone I could onto a cost of living thing like that. Prices affect every woman, in women's liberation and everywhere.

The problem is how to bring people out of their isolation — so that when women leave a refuge, say, there's still contact. And women in the movement could do that, women who've got the time.

Jill: I think the rape issue is really important. Most women are ashamed of the thought of being raped, they never talk about it. One girl told me days after, she'd told no-one, I was really crying. And if you're married it's not counted as rape, that's terrible. You can't tell people what's happened to you, you feel dirty.

Vera: My husband used to batter and attack me. I go to bed now with knickers and a bra on as a sort of protection. He thinks I'm a lesbian now! He can sit in a pub every night with his mates but if you go out with a gang of women that's abnormal. Men get scared when you start going out. He admires it when other women do it, but hits me for it.

AGE

Anna Briggs (North Tyneside Coast Women's Group)

"Sister, you too will grow old, learn to love it!"

This was one of the messages from the workshops on older women's issues. Fifty women attended, most armed with a

conference paper on 'ageism' in society — the sexual and financial position of older women, and the fact that 'community care' means women, especially older women, looking after dependent relatives. This is what emerged:

— Older women often have more conditioning to unlearn and it's difficult to "pull the rug" from under them after years of rationalising their oppression, or kidding themselves they are personally liberated.

— Do 'older' women need separate consciousness raising groups as their problems are different, or should women of all ages give each other mutual support?

— Male colleagues find success in older women very threatening.

— Widowhood is a traumatic time when people could benefit from positive feminist support.

— Will the movement 'grow older' or will older women leave and be replaced?

We talked of the problems older women face, wanting to urge younger women to look at their own attitudes to age and to reassess their campaigns, demanding daycare for dependent relatives as well as nurseries. And we talked of the identity of women as they grow older, particularly centering round the failure of mother/daughter relationships: could mothers and daughters join the same group? How did a mother's illness or death affect the daughter's self-perception?

Women there from the south east decided to convene meetings. Other women will keep in touch by newsletter, and hope to develop the issue in *Spare Rib*, etc.

Contact (include s.a.e.) Jean Salmon, 136 Warren Drive, Elm Park, Hornchurch, Essex (Hornchurch 55715).

A woman from Leicester Women's Liberation

I went to the older women's group — it really brought home to me the problems of 40–50 year old women coming into Women's Liberation, how they feel exclu-

ded: Jam Today, for instance, is great, but it's rock and not all women want that kind of thing. In a way older women are the pioneers for us later.

I've lost a lot of energy lately, I've been in the movement four or five years. The same things are coming up all the time, and they're important every time but I've lost energy to discuss them. This was the only issue that sparked off new thought for me, something new to work on.

I've just moved to Leicester from Leeds. I was surprised how many women I knew, who've been really strong in the movement, haven't come. It's not just that they couldn't make it this week — it's not important to them any more.

RACE

The mass meeting agreed to try to be more aware of ageism, and to confront its own racism. Four black sisters told us to fight racism in our own communities and in ourselves, "rather than approach it from a missionary or social work view". They wanted whites to recognise the autonomy of black women — "And don't just go on about women together and feminism as the issue because that denies our existence."

A lot of women clapped when the black women took the mike (inverted racism?).

Bradford Women

The workshop on racism and fascism was mainly white women talking about racism of black men against black women and finding it frustrating to combat it. Surely they should fight racism within themselves and within the white dominated women's movement. West-Indian and Asian women are assumed to share the same racist experiences — they are lumped together because they are black, there was no awareness of their dissimilar cultural backgrounds. The important thing is for white women not to fall into the trap of thinking that Asian women are meek... It's still hard for English-speaking Asian women to articulate what they feel.



CAROLINE WEBB

Shopping and talking — stalls with feminist literature, clothes, jewellery, candles and posters

Rachel Williams

Out of all the women at the conference only 35 were black. As I was told, this was a tremendous increase from the previous year. I would like (as a black woman) to offer some reasons for this appalling contrast. Black women are not stupid, so we can eliminate this as one of the reasons. Perhaps we don't feel as though racism has been dealt with among the members of the feminist regime; perhaps we feel as though we aren't considered as women who have a cause relevant to the women's movement, suffering a different kind of oppression (oppression none the less).

On Sunday rape and racism were discussed as separate issues. The irony of this came about when one white lady had the audacity to stand up and say that black men were largely responsible for most rapes. The chairwoman and the audience closed the issue on this note, the chairwoman at this point deciding to have a vote, on what I have yet to figure out. One lady thought she was in Parliament.

All of a sudden it was announced that too much time had been devoted to previous sessions, so now only five minutes can be admitted for the discussion of racism. Can you believe five minutes for a discussion on racism? (*We thought what was meant was that black men are blamed for most rapes by the police and the courts?*)

Bristol women talking...

All in Women's Liberation, two also in the Communist Party

Frankie: All the women walking round alone have got really solemn faces — it must be isolating if you don't come with

friends. The women who 'started' the movement set the tone of what it's to be — it's hard for anyone to change that. And middle class women have a tendency to be reserved and not even friendly to each other. In Bristol too we're worried that the women's group's a bit socially impenetrable.

Pam: Our group's quite structured so we find this loose. You can't find out *who* anyone is — you don't know who's doing the work and who's just here for a drink!

Three of us went to the workshop on autonomy and separatism. It was so big, about 300, that it split into seven. In my group we were trying to work out how far women who are married or living with men can free themselves and develop their consciousness. Women need time on their own to define themselves. They need a break from heterosexual relations — they can go back to them after if they want. Some women thought you could stay with men all along. We agreed to differ which I thought was very civilised!

One woman who'd been a lesbian all her life came out very strongly against separatism. The separatists tended to be women who'd more recently come out — they'd had relationships with men in the past, so were defending themselves a bit. Frankie: Throughout the conference I felt a dissatisfaction with the six demands — most of the workshops weren't around them at all. There's no demand around Women's Aid, for instance, and no demands that challenge the power of men. Pam: How can you demand things of men? As women we can demand of the state, and demand it restructure its institutions.

Frankie: But the sum of the demands of the women's movement should make it clear that it's about the relationship between men and women. If we carry on making demands of the state only, we have to work out the relation of

demands to the movement.

Pam: If women are just in action groups, and there's no local forum for discussion, there's no way you can clarify your thoughts in workshops. You never get down to how different groups are handling problems — we need to have the papers in advance. There's no level at which to pitch the discussion.

Lesbian Left's workshop raised important issues. It's encouraging to see left lesbians — four years ago Marx was a man and that was it, and the Virgin Mary was a woman and where do we go from there? Fiona: At the Women's Aid workshop the main feeling was that Women's Aid wasn't getting enough support from other feminists. The group started from the women's movement but are more and more having to get support from other kinds of people, so the whole feeling of the refuges changes, and the women's movement then criticises the Women's Aid group for being reformist. The workshop wanted the relation of Women's Aid to Women's Liberation raised to see how Women's Aid is seen — as reformist or just as overworked! Either way we won't attract many more feminists to it.

(*At the mass meeting we agreed to actively support Women's Aid.*)

What does it mean if other women criticise you for reformism? — that they think their politics are *pure* but aren't putting them into practice. Do you compromise a little and get a refuge for your town or hold back and not get one? Through things like this you actually get *further* with your politics. You have to think out what you *mean* about the family, and about how to bring up children. In one refuge there was a man teaching boys to cook, and a mother objected — they had to discuss it with women who wouldn't otherwise question it.

Oh, and I went to the car maintenance workshop. The practicalities weren't too good as I couldn't see or hear — women left because of that. We were in the car park standing round a small engine in the back of a car — it would have been better to have had an engine in the middle of a room. It was a good idea to have it though — you could learn a lot, and women didn't feel inhibited about asking questions and laughing.

What is female erotica?

"We couldn't think of anything erotic, so we talked about anxieties instead..."

Somebody suggested writing a counter-book to Nancy Friday's *Secret Garden*; something along the lines of "how to make our fantasies acceptable". One woman said she had succeeded in changing her sexual fantasies and explained how: she was always very good at masturbating, because she started when she was three, but she wasn't pleased with her fantasies. So she blocked them

NAC—a feminist campaign

Angela Phillips (London)

As usual there were problems of what to discuss. The majority wanted to consider the relationship between the National Abortion Campaign and the women's movement and therefore necessarily the difficulties of operating alongside members of Left groups. Some others considered such theoretical discussion a waste of time which should have been used discussing action, and a small group of women afterwards expressed annoyance that the discussion hadn't centred around viability and positive legislation.

The discussion did reveal the degree of frustration felt by women's liberation feminists who are, or have been, organising around the abortion issue. In spite of

attempts to prevent the naming of names, the Socialist Worker Party came in for considerable criticism for their insensitive tactics of flooding small groups, alienating the non-aligned women, engaging in a few rounds of sectarian in-fighting and then disappearing for months leaving the group fractured and often unable to reorganise. Unfortunately no members of the SWP were there to answer this criticism.

Feelings were relieved and suggestions aired for a slightly different orientation to the campaign, bringing in the broader aspects of the slogan 'A Woman's Right to Choose' and engaging in more imaginative direct action rather than the perennial demonstrations and meetings. The relatively small size of the workshop was perhaps the biggest indication of the movement's reluctance to engage seriously in the abortion campaign at present. We can only hope that the mass meeting's vote to support the demonstra-

tion against the Benyon Bill will prove to be an expression of concrete support rather than a meaningless raising of hands.

Claimants/5th demand

The following resolution was passed to be supported by the Women's Liberation Movement:

"An immediate end to all forms of sexual discrimination contained in social security legislation.

In particular we demand the abolition of the *cohabitation* rule, the *married couple* rate and the *head of household* rule.

Women should be positively encouraged to claim social security benefits in their own right.

Maintenance and affiliation matters should be outside the scope of the Supplementary Benefits scheme.

Every individual person, whether in or out of employment, should receive a Guaranteed Minimum Income as of right with clear legal entitlement.

Child benefits should be raised and paid on top of this to the person responsible for the day to day care of the child."

At the mass meeting the Fifth Demand group (for Financial and Legal Independence) said they were behind the spirit of it but objected to the bit about a Guaranteed Minimum Income. They argued it was not a tactical demand as we couldn't expect to get it at the moment, and that it would amount to implicit support for the Wages for Housework Campaign, which they oppose. They wanted more discussion of the issues, but were outvoted.

wires

Al Garthwaite (Leeds)

Everyone thinks the Movement needs a national twice-monthly communication between groups and individuals. But only 40 groups and 230 individuals subscribe to the newsletter, which is internal to the movement and can only be sold under the counter in bookshops. So you can't get single copies easily, but you're welcome to take copies on sale or return.

The newsletter needs *more* letters and opinions about what women are thinking and doing, and why, and how, and what the problems are. Just write a few lines on why your women's centre failed, or problems of a middle class lesbian feminist group campaigning for a nursery with working class housewives, or whatever. We'll all benefit. Also when advertising a conference, organisers could say what they hope will come out of it — and write and say (honestly) what did.

Unless more groups and individuals buy the newsletter it'll be impossible to advertise and extend WIRES' postal and telephone information service.

WIRES is still in Leeds; no other group volunteered to run it (but it's up for grabs as from now, let us know). Contact us at 30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 2 (Leeds 35561). (See classifieds.)



Towards a female erotica? Yoga workshop

off. She thought this was no good so what she did was to masturbate while having the old 'bad' fantasies, and then, just before she came, she switched to a 'good' one; one of which she approved. She didn't explain though what fantasies she approved of.

We didn't know what 'erotica' meant so we went round the group and said what 'turned us on'...

- fields, sun, clothes, anything if I'm in the mood
- the 'unobtainable'
- straight pornography
- nurses uniforms
- nothing
- Paul Newman
- True Romance fantasies
- not much, since I've become conscious of sexism
- tall, slim women in pin-striped suits

Frankie (Bristol)

In my group we were all heterosexual or bisexual. We felt contradictory about our sexuality and how sexist it was — that eroticism as we experience it is power-

based. The sixth demand is up in the air, we don't know what a self-defined sexuality is. We're attracted to loud, large, aggressive men — only one woman said she didn't go for such traditional forms. The fact that we go on copulating with men is sexist — it puts down women and isn't primarily designed to please us. Masturbating is the easiest way to get orgasms, and other ways with men are more satisfying than penetration, but we're conditioned to think it all has to end with a man ejaculating. We all felt our satisfaction was very much tied up with men's. In relationships with women too I go for women more confident and powerful than myself.

"The conference — the ultimate Consumer Fantasy: which workshop to choose, which canteen, which hall, which person to talk to? Always wondering if I've made the wrong choice and what I'm missing."

Autonomy & Separatism

Is it necessary for the movement to be autonomous?

What does autonomy mean?

Is its logical conclusion separatism?

Betsy Ettore (London)

There exists a real problem in distinguishing between the autonomy and separatism issues as political strategies. They are related theoretically, yet quite distinct in terms of their tactics. Autonomy means:

- equality — materially, sexually, politically
- the politics of the women's liberation

movement, our politics as women

- the development of a separate power base as women
- that we see where our power lies in the recognition of our powerlessness
- a direct attack against patriarchy and capitalism, the sexual division of labour
- that we establish the necessity for us as women to be free to choose and organise as women together apart from men
- and is the practice of feminism
- *most importantly that the necessary link between the personal and the political is established. Autonomy means self-definition (on the individual level) and the development of a separate power base from men (on the political level)*

Separatism as a political issue;
— is one of the strands of the politics of

feminism

- takes the establishment of a separate power base issue (which is the strategy of autonomy) to its ultimate end, that is, in the establishment of the power of women to the total exclusion of men
- establishes the primary importance of a women's culture in direct opposition to patriarchy (male culture)
- developed and develops as more and more autonomous women became and become disillusioned with the elements of the women's liberation movement which are regressive and still remain male-defined.

Separatism as an offshoot of the autonomy principle becomes a personal-political solution in an extreme way to developing a separate power base — the power of women.

The solution of separatism is to re-organise women's lifestyles, our work, our beliefs, our definitions, our politics, with ourselves totally and thus develop a new woman — a new women's culture — a new society.

The workshop proved to be a clearing house for ideas which women wanted to discuss and which challenged our traditional views of autonomy. Some women felt that autonomy equals separatism. Others felt that autonomy is quite different from separatism. Some of the sisters viewed separatism as lifestyle politics of an elite few. The view that autonomy was set up as an ideal never to be realised was also put forth.

At the plenary session a resolution was passed (almost unanimously) which came out of the workshop. The autonomy issue became incorporated into future politics of the movement when we supported the principle of an all-women's march to celebrate International Women's Day. (Previously the issue of an all-women's march caused much division within the movement.)

Perhaps our politics as women are understood only when we work out the politics of autonomy in all areas and levels of our social lives.



CAROLINE WEBB

Workshop on motorcycle maintenance

Revolutionary feminism

Sheila Jeffreys (London)

I asked to have a workshop entitled 'The Need for Revolutionary Feminism — against the liberal takeover of the women's liberation movement', as a result of my growing feeling of alienation and isolation within the movement. I had been unable to discover a *political* feminism. There was sex-rolism, lifestyleism, and socialist feminism. I was in a desperate search for radical feminist theory which talked of the power of men and how to take it from them. Politics was taken to mean socialism, and theory the extension of Marxism. I was terrified lest I grew to hate my sisters because of the frustration and anger I felt at so many meetings, workshops and conferences where no one spoke of power, but of

campaigns or sexuality or structure, etc. I could not imagine that I was the first or only person saying these things, and I felt that I daren't write them down because they must already be written somewhere, but I couldn't find them. So eventually I had to do it myself.

I expected 12–50 women to come to the workshop and had no idea whether they would come to criticise or support, and I was very nervous. About 200 women came and were tremendously supportive and enthusiastic. I was not only not alone but had struck gold.

We compiled a list of well over 100 names of seriously interested women, the beginnings of a network across the country of revolutionary/radical feminists. There's to be a conference to discuss theory on 2/3 July in Edinburgh. The contact address is 'The Radical Feminist Theory group', The Women's Centre, 160 Fountainbridge, Edinburgh; contact lists available from the same address.

Claire MacDonald and Anna Wyatt (Leeds)

If feminists smash male power and set up a separate power base as women then we will have altered the power balance from one sexual group to the other and not exploded that structure which assigns power on a sexual basis. We see feminism as revolutionary in its potential to subvert the whole basis of the division of power according to sexual status. This aim can only be achieved under a socialism with feminist principles as its base — principles for instance of non-hierarchy, decentralisation, direct representation and collectivity, which we believe has been hitherto underestimated as a political force.

Autonomy is necessary for us to reach a positive identity in a society where our identity is male defined and for us to effect change based on our collective strength. We don't think that autonomy implies total separatism. In total separatism based on anger and hatred of men

we will carry forward all the hurt we have received from men, themselves dominated by an inflated masculine ideal.

Pat Carr (London)

I am not a separatist, or a lesbian, and that affects how I feel about working/organising with women only. I also reject the analysis that men as a class oppress women as a class. There are women who uphold the present capitalist state oppressive society, plenty of them who are in positions of power, and these women are my class enemies — women like the Queen and Margaret Thatcher, and all the other women who collaborate with men to keep the authoritarian capitalist system going.

Non-violence

Jenny Jacobs (London)

We were sad about the amount of violence shown at the conference. Firstly a few fights broke out between sisters and secondly people dealt with each other violently in workshops — shouting each other down, not listening to each other and not caring about minority interests. We found particularly offensive, among those we went to, the workshop on Revolutionary Feminism, Prostitution and the meeting about the European Socialist Feminist Conferences. Disruptive action like this is a patriarchal trip and it must be sickening many to see women acting as though violence were inevitable and some sort of solution.

About 60 women came to the workshop organised by the Feminism and Non-violence study group, called because we thought the WLM is in danger of perpetuating some of the patterns of the male value system, in particular by not talking about the question of violence. We discussed non-violent ways of dealing with threats of personal violence (street

Jules Blair (London)

Power. No sisters, autonomy does not mean power for me. Since the Oxford conference in 1970 I have been aware that what I want is the sort of caring and concern that the sisters showed for each other there. I want a country where men as well as women get their self-esteem from the sorts of ways women have been socialised into accepting. I want them to enjoy as much as I do using their experience and affection to help, not only their own families, but everyone they come in touch with, to develop without intolerance and restriction their individual gifts for everyone's benefit.

hassles, rape attacks), e.g. "non-violent flying squads." We spoke a lot about our view of revolution and the kind of society we are working towards. There was a lot of enthusiasm for another National Conference on Non-Violence and Feminism in the autumn. Contact Jenny Jacobs, 37 Rochester Road, London SE3.

Lesbian heterosexual dialogue

Berta Freistadt (London)

I called a workshop to set up a dialogue between lesbians and heterosexuals, after experiencing a very negative atmosphere at last year's conference. I wondered if I had been paranoid, but several women confirmed that they had felt similar things. Also confirmed was my feeling that this year's conference was freer of antagonism.

For me, a so-called 'straight', it both cleared the air and showed me a little of how my lesbian sisters feel and think. Firstly, I hope I've got this right, being a lesbian is a political decision, a public confrontation as it were. Also that being a lesbian is less to do with who you sleep with and more to do with an emotional commitment, where you expend most of your energies.

Many of us 'hets' felt a great ambivalence towards our sexual state: we too put women first although our lovers were at the moment men. I think some of us felt we have a lesbian potential that may or may not one day be realised.

Lesbian left

'A lesbian group attempting a Marxist feminist practice' who produced several papers for the conference.

Siobhan and Maria (London and Brighton)

After the Lesbian Left workshop we realised we could have had the same discussion at any workshop on sexuality in a socialist feminist context. Most of the Lesbian Left women there were trying so hard not to be 'divisive' and to be

scientific that they were playing down being lesbian; the politics were watered down.

"I don't feel that I'm retreating from the nasty but real struggle of men and women, to the cosy world of 'lifestyling' with my sisters," was how someone described her lesbianism. That's too easy a polarisation, too easy an abnegation of the positive aspects of being with women, whatever the distortions under capitalism.

Prostitution

Nicola Rane (London)

The workshop revealed what an apparent lack of understanding there is between sisters in the movement. A prostitute, Jayne, was present; many women had come to discuss what they saw as the prostitution of their everyday lives; many of us came unprepared for the 'common prostitute' (Jayne's term). The focus for discussion lay with Jayne whose attitude towards her work stirred up a great deal of confusion and anger.

Jayne saw "flogging her hole" as a means of controlling her own life, providing a comfortable life for her son, by earning higher, untaxed wages than most of us could hope for. She emphasized that clients only got her cunt, not her.

As for being dependent upon a ponce, Jayne told us that this was a myth and that prostitutes had the right to choose whether they took one on. Several women asked Jayne about what they had supposed was the oppressive side of her job, the threat to prostitutes' children by Social Services, arrest and constant harassment for soliciting, etc., and Jayne surprised many present by saying that in her experience these commonly held ideas were a fallacy and that she had had few hassles from the police or the law in general.

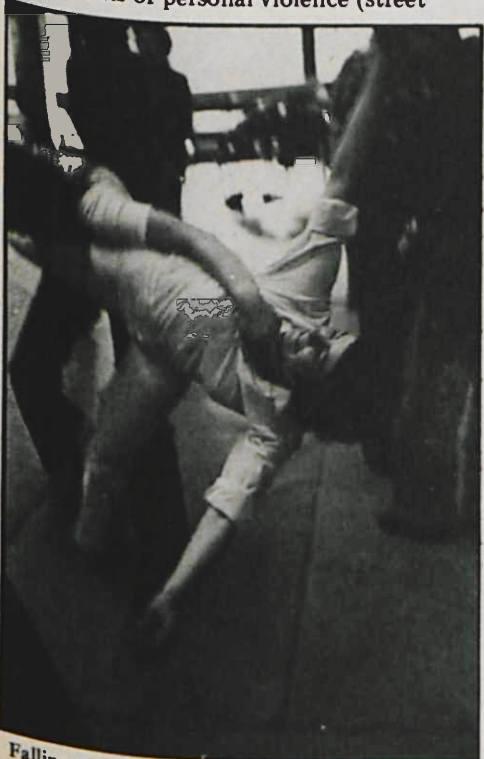
Many women were startled by the anger of Jayne's arguments and tried to reaffirm that the term 'prostitute' is an arbitrary one, which applies to all women whether we are flogging our arses to our men for a roof over our heads or for £30 a week in an office or factory.

At this point several women took over the workshop, attacking the others as self-indulgent because they had come to the workshop solely to discuss their own oppression whilst ignoring the real issue. Many of those present felt too intimidated to speak and they left the meeting equally angry by this breakdown in communication.

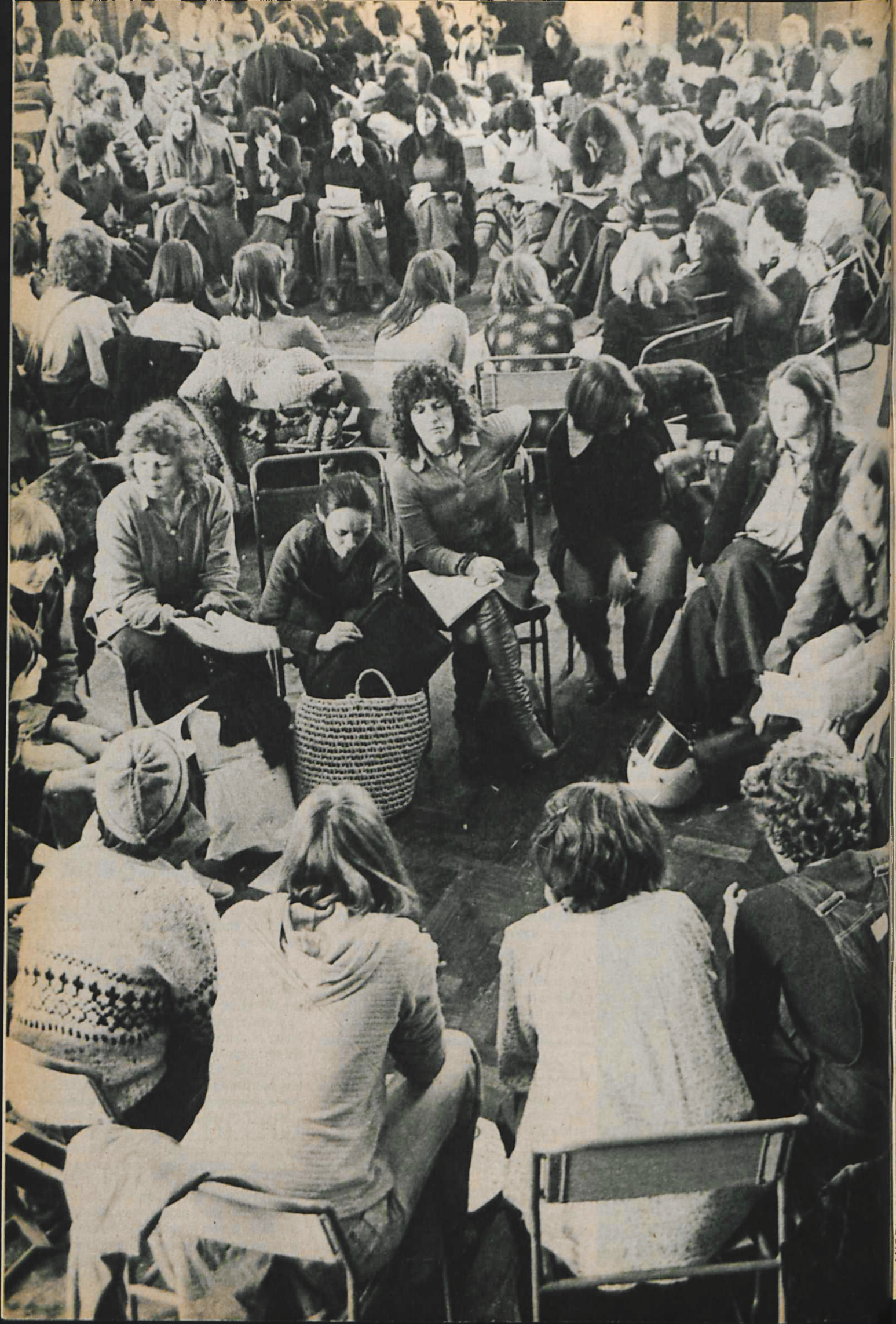
Children as property

A woman from Norwich

Most of the women in the workshop had children. It was very supportive and we were able to talk about some of the problems we have as mothers within the women's movement:



Falling on your feet — Kung Fu workshop



ANGELA PHILLIPS (16) - COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL WORKSHOP

The difficulties in working out how to give kids autonomy in a society that constantly reinforces their dependence on adults

Conflicts within ourselves in overcoming our socialisation in the way we see and relate to our kids

The feeling that some sisters in the movement don't offer support to women with kids. To maintain that you've made a political decision not to have children doesn't mean that you can deny any responsibility for other women's kids. If we believe in the long term in collective childcare then we should try to put this into practice now. It's also important for the kids to have wider social contacts.

Pam Williams (London)

Saturday was the most fantastic day of my life. I've never been to a Women's Conference before. It was amazing to be in a building surrounded by strong, open, loving women.

I used a speculum for the first time at the Self Help Health Workshop. I've had two miscarriages and one child but this

Well, ladies, what you've all been waiting for! What was everyone wearing at the conference?

Well, as one might have imagined, badly-cut trousers and quiet shades of blue, brown and grey were almost de rigueur. There were exceptions, of course, a few sisters still clinging to the Indian/Afghan styles of a few years back, a few in shabby dresses or dirndl skirts, but not many. There were a very small number of women who were smartly dressed (including one, astonishing lady in knee-length tweed coat and flesh-coloured stockings [seamless] who seemed unaware of the askance glances she was getting from her sisters!) but of course these were "older" women, so it was understandable.

Within the trousers ranks, ill-fitting jeans tended to be chosen by those ladies with large hips, and the close-fitting, sexier kinds by those sisters who don't mind getting Thrush. Dungarees, as one might have expected, were even more in evidence than last year. Jumble clothes were everywhere! Ranging from a pink (un-ironed) bedjacket to neat little 30's dresses and victorian jackets.

Accessories? Canvas shoulderbags (especially the authentic, green Chinese variety) predominated. There were — let me assure you — no shopping bags or standard handbags, and very few suitcases. A smattering of sisters wore a smattering of make-up, and silver or steel 'political' jewellery was the rule. Three or four badges seemed an acceptable number to be wearing (if one was wearing any this year) and walking boots and running shoes were everywhere on the floor.

All in all, ladies, it was amazing to see how this concourse of women of all ages, classes, races, creeds (of course they were, weren't they?) looked so similar. It's a tribute to our dress-sense, isn't it? Let us give thanks, and wonder why our mothers/factory-workers/typists/OAPs don't join us?

was the first time I'd ever seen my cervix.

The workshop on the Concept of Children as Property had to divide into three. The discussion in our group centred largely on how much we can share responsibility in child rearing. We talked about communal living which some saw as a solution. One was living in a group who seemed to be successfully sharing responsibility, another lived in a house with children who were not hers and found it difficult to feel she should take responsibility for someone else's children.

Other questions discussed were: should people live with children if they're not prepared to take on an active role in their upbringing? Are parents prepared to renounce the control they have over their children's lives? Children are valuable but does anybody own them? It can be frightening to be a parent in this society — to be more or less forced to take an authoritative role.

Creche

Sue Green (London)

There's a lot of confusion in the movement on the question of children. Some women seem to have reached the extreme view that children should not be looked after by men. Some even seem to think that children don't exist, or should not like men, and many are still unaware of or ignore the fact that many of their sisters are mothers, as many of their sisters are black.

I couldn't have gone to the conference if there hadn't been a creche — it was run by men from London Men Against Sexism groups and other libertarian groups and excellently organised, as was the conference itself. The creche for under-threes was arranged into areas for registration, play, eating, nappy changing and sleeping. There was plenty of space and play equipment and every accessory needed for caring for small children. In the past there have been so many badly-run or non-existent creches at leftwing meetings that one begins to wonder if parents are not expected to be political; I myself feel deeply discriminated against as a single woman with a child if there aren't adequately arranged creches.

For childless women to tell me that men should not look after children is an outrage and a disgrace to the movement. The Sheffield women made arrangements for the kids to be looked after communally in Sheffield: "Lots of women don't like to dump their kids with strangers — and then there's the journey. It's much easier that way," said one.

The men who ran it

We are planning a newsletter on our experience of the creche, feelings and practical matters that may help others planning a large conference creche.

Anyone who was at the conference or the creche who would like to share her feelings — anyone who has helped at other large creches — anyone who would like a copy of the newsletter when it comes out — please write to Danny, 15 Rosslyn Hill, London NW3 5UJ.

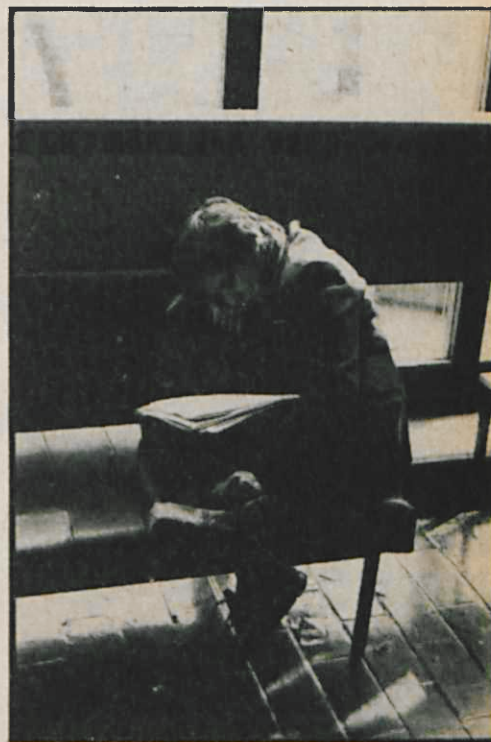
Mental health

Jo Ryan (London)

Lots of women turned up to the various workshops to do with mental health. The discussions included: how is feminist therapy different from 'straight' therapy; how is it different from consciousness raising; how does doing therapy relate to fighting material oppression; does mental illness exist; the oppression of women by the psychiatric establishment and in mental hospitals; the use of drugs. We felt it important to press for reforms in mental hospitals now until we can establish a real alternative.

A lot of energy was generated in these workshops and many contacts made. We felt a need for a supportive network of feminists concerned with mental health; and further development of a feminist theory and practice, to offer support to women in distress both inside and outside the women's movement. We want to challenge the concept of mental illness and the way society oppresses us as women, and to liaise with other groups concerned with mental health.

The whole conference agreed that this was an important area of struggle. A conference on women and mental health is planned for late September. Contact Sarah McGuire, 34 Ashmore Rd, London W9.



ANNIE WRIGHT

Gestalt

Anny Brackx (London)

I arrived half an hour late for this workshop, and it looked more like a pupils and teacher session.

... "We don't think it's advisable to do 'bodywork' in a big group like this." Bodywork? She didn't explain really. "Let's do a non-verbal exercise instead. You choose a partner and take it in turns to withdraw and make contact with the other without talking." Some



women started to question the purpose of it all; why not go on talking about what it means. . . We got partnered off anyway. Well, I was quite willing to try some play acting. My partner withdrew, sitting head down, crosslegged on the table. The problem hit me fully when I realised that the only way to get to her was to touch her — I felt twitchy . . . So I tried to make her laugh, catch her eyes . . . she held out. Finally I got hold of her hands, firmly — not to give the wrong impression — she did have an interesting face . . . She gave in; relief. My turn to withdraw. She was calm, acted slowly, caressing my neck and face. My whole body blushed in embarrassment and sensual agony. My response was quick, before more could be visible. We talked. I felt confused, exposed, fragile. Then all of us compared impressions, feelings. "It's not on to touch a stranger in England." Yes, touching's the problem; it skips stages; "breaks the ice quicker". I explained my confusion: you have a 1½ hour exercise in feeling close to somebody and then go out of the door, empty, off to another workshop. It's not real life; you cannot go up to a strange woman in the laundrette and grab hold of her hands. Oh yes, and I did feel sensual at my partner's touch, but she didn't. . . Well c'est la vie. So I run off to another workshop and another dose of sisterhood.

Theatre & poetry

Celia (Sheffield)

I went to feminist theatre and loved it, just what I wanted. We did limbering up exercises and then split into groups. Mine took newspaper clippings of sexist stories and in threes or fours worked out how to put it over in a dramatic form.

Some women just discussed, some took an actual script about abortion and went off to work on it. I'm not in a theatre group, though I've done some amateur acting and I'd like to do street theatre, but it's not that easy in a place like Sheffield.

After a couple more workshops I felt wiped out, I'd got very claustrophobic, tired and fed up, so a friend and I went out, drank quarter of a bottle of

whisky and swang on the swings in the park. It all feels a bit overwhelming — I haven't really met anybody, it's not been the kind of conference where women actually *talk* to each other — you feel they're avoiding each other's eyes in the dinner queue.

Jules Holledge (London)

Sitting in the bar on Saturday night with a long awaited pint I listened with great pleasure to Gay Sweatshop's Poetry Show. It wasn't just the poems I enjoyed but the performance itself. It was as if an invitation was being extended to all of us to develop a new language of self-expression.

Structure and energy

Cathy Nairn (London)

My overall impression was of the enormous potential energy we have; energy which needs directing, focussing — energy which is still often being used in destructive ways — to fight with each other, to put ourselves down — but I got high off it and was strengthened by it.

I felt this potential in the drama and movement workshop where, as someone put it, "we lost our inhibitions in ten minutes". I felt it in the intensity of the women who were giving themselves through singing and playing their own music, and in the excitement generated by hearing women's music — and I felt it in the commitment of the planning group, and in the heat of discussion in the final mass meeting.

Astrid (German woman from Newcastle)

So many women from so many different places. Each of us full of our own excitement and expectations building up to the euphoric solidarity of sisterhood at the dance. No wonder there's the inevitable come-down next day when we all gather at the mass meeting to thrash out ideas. And the harshness of some of the arguments betrays the euphoria of the night before — showing it for what it is: the blindfolded celebration of a rather desperate minority

which despite the impressive turnout of a few thousand remains split within itself and isolated from the vast majority of womankind.

Sue Richardson (Cleveland)

This is being written as the conference is ending and is about why I won't be here next year. Now that I am drawing the threads together to go home, I wonder how relevant the experience of the weekend has been.

Today I saw a mother in an emotional hassle with her child, just like the ones I get into with my own daughter. She made me feel angry and I realised that there has not always been a lot of tolerance or human sharing over the last two days. I now regret that the lesbians made me feel guilty and threatened enough to spend time in a workshop discussing this issue, which for me, is an intellectual, rather than a real problem. My life consists of going to work, rearing my children, being worried — these are the things I should have been working on instead. I wonder how many other sisters have been through the same. Perhaps we should have smaller, regional conferences instead where people can begin to communicate rather than retreat behind their own barriers.

Cath Prior (Manchester)

Above all, it was really well organised. Perhaps this prevented 'explosions' between groups of women on the scale of previous conferences. Certainly, there were conflicts (my utopian wishes for perfect sisterhood, peace and love are perhaps fortunately never met), but for the first time at a National Conference I felt that they got aired in the fairly positive plenary session.

Leicester Women's Liberation

Sometimes I think we should start by touching each other — there's a lot of tension about.

It's encouraging because there's so many women and so many ideas, but frustrating because we hold each other apart. In the older women's group one woman just burst out "You're all talking about my group, my group, I'm not even in a group." These conferences can be the most isolating places in the world. The smaller workshops are best because you can actually talk, it's not just confrontational slogans. There's so many splits in the movement, and that's potentially good, we shouldn't cover them up and pretend we don't have differences, but at huge conferences it just gets polarised and doesn't go further — people don't look for what's positive, for the basis they have in common, so they can understand and maybe change.

Next year's conference will be in Birmingham (though a lot of sisters wanted it to be in St Andrews). Apologies to anyone we've had to cut or leave out. Response was huge, we couldn't use everything. We've tried to bring out as many points of view as possible.



CHEMISTRY OF WOMEN

Symbol - Wo

Atomic Weight - Light but heavy

Physical Properties

1. Surface usually found with film of painted oxide.
2. Boils at nothing, freezes without reason.
3. Unpolished specimens turn green in presence of polished ones.
4. All varieties melt when given proper treatment.
5. Bitter if used incorrectly.
6. Density varies from great to infinity.
7. States: from virgin metal to common ore.

*Pure specimen turns rosy when discovered in natural state.

Chemical Properties

1. Highly explosive except in experienced hands.
2. Attracted by gold and silver.
3. Ability to absorb quantities of liquid sustenance.
4. May explode spontaneously when left with male.
5. Insoluble in liquid but activity greatly increased.
6. Yields to pressure.
7. Ages vary rapidly.

Uses

Chiefly ornamental.
Reducing agent (see Bank Balance).
Illegal to possess more than one married specimen but a certain amount of exchange is permitted.

From King's College, London's rag magazine
Sent in by Catherine Ebenezer, London SW17

From Radical Philosophy No.16 Sent in by Stef Pixner, London E8

Throughout the sixties and early seventies English academic Marxism lay back with its legs open. We experienced the successive thrills of penetration by the giants of continental European Marxist philosophy.

A letter from The Lady magazine to an advertiser
Sent in by A. Miconi, London SE3

M. M. BOWLES T. C. A. BOWLES J. M. BUDWORTH

The Lady

PUBLISHED EVERY THURSDAY

39-40 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND, LONDON WC2E 9ER

Telephone: 01-836 8705 Telegrams: LADINEWS LONDON WC2

Our Ref: Sit/QC 22nd March 1977

Mrs A. Miconi,
Flat 17, Lyncourt,
The Orchard,
Blackheath,
London SE3

Dear Madam,

We thank you for your letter and payment of £3.80, received on 21st March.

Before proceeding, we must ask whether you would agree to a slight amendment of the wording in order that the advertising conforms to our normal style. The words "Socialist feminist" we would prefer to read "Friendly, motherly," thereby allowing the wording to conform.

We now look forward to your further instructions, whilst advising you that our next issue is 7th April for which we close for press upon receipt of the first post Tuesday 29th March.

Yours faithfully
THE LADY

CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENT DEPARTMENT

Judge warns rapist, 68

A JUDGE at Leeds Crown Court yesterday gave a warning to a 68-year-old pensioner who pleaded guilty to raping a 70-year-old widow.

Mr Justice Thesiger, said: "With your state of health, with your high blood pressure, I warn you not to behave like this. You may overture your heart and die in most unfortunate circumstances." Then he gave Mr George Dickinson, a widower, of Woodhouse Hill Road, Leeds, a two year suspended sentence.

The Guardian March 1977 Sent in by Hilary Cannon, Bristol

Tooth & Nail

PLEASE KEEP SENDING
SEXIST CUTTINGS,
PHOTOS, QUOTES AND
ADVERTISEMENTS TO
"TOOTH AND NAIL",
INCLUDING ALL DETAILS
WHICH MAY BE NEEDED
BY PEOPLE WANTING
TO FIGHT BACK.

WHO TO ATTACK ABOUT
SEXIST ADS:
the manufacturers of the product
advertised and/or the agency
who make up the ad.
WHO TO COMPLAIN TO:
The Independent Broadcasting
Authority, for ITV ads and
programmes, 70 Brompton Road,
London SW9.

The Advertising Standards
Authority, though notoriously
unresponsive to complaints
about sexism, 15 Ridgmount
Street, London WC1.
WHO TO WORK WITH:
AFFIRM (Alliance For Fair
Images and Representation in
Media). A group acting against
sexism and offensive stereotyping,
can be contacted at 35
Colehearn Road, London SW10.

Manchester Evening News March 1977
Sent in by Gaby Porter, Salford

Women's liberation?

A busy housewife may find she's never really free - from responsibility, from worry, from sheer hard work. She gets few chances to relax, little opportunity to eat properly, and that's when vitamin deficiency can arise.

When you start to feel increasingly tired, out of sorts, hemmed in, it may be through a temporary lack of vitamins.

Pharmaton Capsules can help restore the balance, because they contain the vitamins essential for healthy living, plus many important minerals and trace elements. They're the easiest way of making sure of your daily vitamin requirements.

Try them - just ask your chemist for Pharmaton Capsules.

Pharmaton Capsules

The Swiss combination of vitamins, minerals and Ginseng

For further information please write to
The Pharmaton
Information Bureau,
Spinney House,
Church Street,
Liverpool L1 3AU.



Dory Previn



ON TOUR

May
 SUN. 15th CROYDON Fairfield Halls
 MON. 16th BIRMINGHAM Town Hall
 THU. 19th DUBLIN Stadium
 SAT. 21st GLASGOW Apollo
 SUN. 22nd EDINBURGH Usher Hall
 MON. 23rd MANCHESTER Free Trade Hall
 TUE. 24th BRISTOL Colston Hall
 THU. 26th LEEDS University
 SAT. 28th LONDON Royal Albert Hall
 SUN. 29th OXFORD New Theatre
 MON. 30th LONDON New Victoria Theatre
 June
 WED. 1st BRIGHTON Dome
 THU. 2nd SOUTHAMPTON Guild Hall

TEN OF HER MOST
 POIGNANT SONGS
 SCARED TO BE ALONE

TWENTY-MILE ZONE

DOPPELGÄNGER

THE ALTRUIST AND THE NEEDY CASE

LADY WITH THE BRAID

MYTHICAL KINGS AND IGUANAS

LEMON HAired LADIES

MARY C. BROWN AND THE

HOLLYWOOD SIGN

KING KONG

BE CAREFUL, BABY, BE CAREFUL

Dory Previn
 One A.M. phonecalls



ONE A.M. PHONECALLS

Album UAS 30070, Cassette TCK 30070



NEWS

Even less research on cervical cancer

Cervical cancer is the second most lethal cancer in women after breast cancer. With regular smear tests, if cancer cells are found, a local operation can be carried out which would stop the cancer spreading. Yearly smear tests are important as they give early warning of a disease which takes 15 years to develop.

The leading centre for the detection and research of cervical cancer through smear tests is at Christie Hospital in Manchester. They've been told there's to be no expansion of their work because of Health Service cuts. How does this affect the struggle against cervical cancer?

Marion Bowman reports.

There were only eight people working at Christie's smear test unit when it was set up in 1965. Now there are 84, dealing with nearly 200,000 smears a year from women all over the North West, from Carlisle to Crewe.

The smears are sent in by post from GP surgeries and Family Planning Clinics, so the staff there, mainly women working as laboratory technicians with two men in charge, never come into contact with their subjects. They only see the smear of tiny cells scooped off the neck of the womb after the vagina's been opened with a speculum, and the results of the screening are then filed away until the woman's next test.

The practical work of detecting infection and disease is closely tied up with research into cervical cancer. For the research, they need a mass of statistics which are reliable and Christie's are because they have hundreds of thousands of women on their books, and the records of tests done ten years ago to compare with tests on the same women today.

But with the cuts in the National Health Service, the validity of their statistics will be seriously affected. Dr

Robert Yule, the consultant cytologist in charge of the unit, said: "No money's being cut or staff lost, but we've been told that next year we'll have to carry on on the same basis. We need not expect additional funding."

This year's budget for the tests is £180,000, and they cost about 90p each. With a budget that doesn't account for inflation, let alone provide for expansion, Dr Yule and his staff can expect to do significantly fewer tests next year.

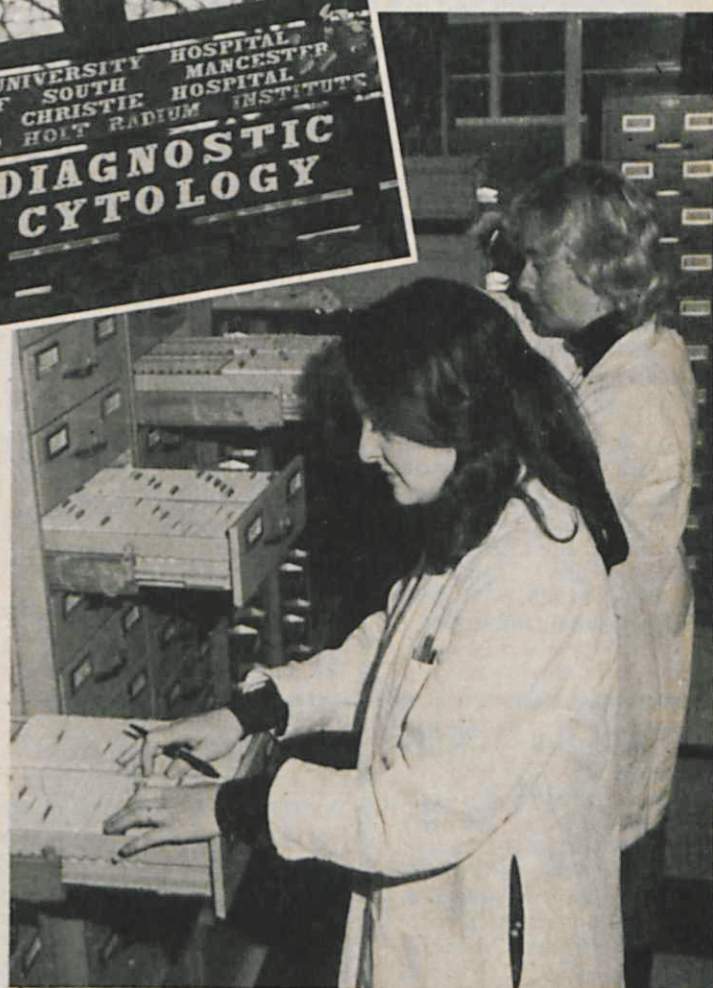
In addition, the North West is the only area in the country where women are automatically called back for another test every three years. In the rest of the country it's every five years and from April, the North West has to conform with that.

Dr Yule comments: "It seems that people who fund research are more interested in the basic research with animals which is duplicated all over the world, than in the practical, clinical research being done in this field."

How Is It Caused?

Robert Yule says, "If we can work out *who* gets it, we might be able to work out *why*."

Early and frequent sexual intercourse with several men



Lab. technicians Anne Waite and Jane Cardwell with records of the thousands of women on file for screening at Christie Hospital

seems to be a common factor in women who get the disease. From the Registrar General's records, nuns never die of cervical cancer. Ironically, women are only listed by their occupations if they're single. Married women are identified by their husband's occupation.

The main theories for the cause of cervical cancer are that it's caused by men through either a virus, or the head of the sperm penetrating the neck of the cervix. As a result, Robert Yule says it might not necessarily be promiscuity which causes the cancer so much as *unprotected* intercourse — not using either a diaphragm or sheath, which would protect women from cervical cancer in much the same way as they do from VD.

"There've been three peaks in the incidence of cervical

cancer," said Dr Yule. "The first was 15 years after the First World War. The second, 15 years after the Second World War; and the third 15 years after the Pill.

"The Pill was liberation for men, not women. It allows men to do as they please, but for women it swopped unwanted pregnancy for cervical cancer."

Class Factor

He sees a definite class factor in the occurrence of the disease. Cervical cancer is much commoner in poor areas where women tend to marry earlier and have large families through an economic dependence on men and poor contraceptive facilities.

"Women in poor areas are always at the end of the queue for anything, whether it's family planning or vaccination."

SNAIL GRAPHICS

FOREIGN NEWS

She hasn't got time to think about herself -- she's at the end of her own family queue for one thing. Better off women aren't so much in need of facilities. They're interested in health matters and can seek out help," he said.

To get the message over, Dr Yule feels it's important to recruit the help of the health visitors, surgery receptionists and nurses who come into contact with women. "They can persuade a woman who comes in with a sick child to have a smear test there and then. It's no good making an appointment for a month to come. These women don't live by appointment, they live from day to day," he said paternalistically.

"The best thing is if we can get to the Elsie Tanner figure of the neighbourhood and get her to take a test -- and pray it's negative -- the other women will follow."*

Province of Doctors

The North West Regional Health Authority is now organising conferences for the nurses, receptionists and health visitors -- there was one in January at Prestwich Hospital in Manchester. But the main aim is that these employees should publicise the tests. There's no suggestion that they should be trained to do the tests themselves, though they seem simple enough. That is to remain the province of the doctors. And as yet, Women's Health Groups are not invited to attend. Neither Dr Yule nor the Health Authority seemed to know about self-help or the idea of well woman "medicine".

Dr Yule's reaction was: "It's potentially dangerous for women to examine themselves. However intelligent or sensible these groups of women are, they are untrained. They aren't even trained on the lines of Chinese para-medical workers. There would be something to be said for it if they were. But anything that would disseminate information and cause people to talk about it can only help. People should be more educated about smear tests, but educated to seek out advice at an early stage and to have regular check ups."□

* A positive smear test doesn't necessarily mean cancer.

● In connection with the report on P.R.O.S. (SR 56), we wish to make it clear that P.R.O.S. and probation are two independent organisations -- we apologise for any confusion caused in this respect.□

Birth Control Clinic Firebombed

Diane DeBell and Vicki Lofquist report from the USA on the firebombing of a contraception and abortion clinic in St Paul, Minnesota. "The events in St Paul must be viewed in the context of a national erosion of women's rights."

On Ash Wednesday, February 23, a newly opened Planned Parenthood Clinic in St Paul was fire bombed. Within minutes the gasoline-fed explosion engulfed the first floor and caused structural damage estimated at £150,000. The clinic is Minnesota's main family planning training center -- five per cent of its services are first trimester abortions (ie done in the first three months of pregnancy).

This violent attack came after ten months' harassment and intimidation of the clinic, its board of directors, sponsors, employees and patients. There have been bomb threats and windows broken by stones, cement bricks and gunshot. 'Death', 'Dachau' and 'Abortion Kills' have been painted

on outside walls.

"Whether or not the perpetrators were themselves activists in the anti-abortion movement isn't the central issue," said Jack Hood Vaughn, president of the National Planned Parenthood Federation (roughly equivalent to Britain's Family Planning Association before its clinics were taken over by the National Health Service). "This act is the sorry culmination of the longest and most virulent campaign ever conducted against a health facility in this country."

St Paul is a northern, mid-western city next to Minneapolis. The two cities make up a single urban area called the Twin Cities, with a popu-

lation of about two million. It's a self-consciously progressive, middle-class, wealthy area, almost exclusively white, and proud of its history of liberal legislation, its low crime rate and little poverty.

The cities are a centre for cultural life in the Northwest and their leading politicians tend to be prominent nationally, mainly as liberal Democrats.

The vigorous, well-funded campaign against a woman's right to choose is particularly significant because of the traditional veneer of liberalism in this area.

Press and Clergy to Blame

"I was shocked and outraged," said Susan Vass, a member of a woman's-right-to-choose group, "if this is what they call pro-life -- pap smear and breast cancer tests could have been lost. They didn't consider it a health clinic. But really, this is the logical extension of thinking which sees the rights of a fertilised egg as more important than a woman's rights."

"A climate exists which allowed the fire to happen," said Connie Waterous, one of the directors. "The media persist in calling the facility an 'abortion clinic' and they don't give coverage to the neighbourhood group which supports us. The clergy is to blame too... some Catholic churches have been used as a base for anti-clinic activity."

Planned Parenthood didn't anticipate trouble when they bought the building, located between a drive-in hamburger restaurant and a carwash on Ford Parkway, a four-lane thoroughfare zoned for businesses and offices.

But across the Parkway and down a block there's a Catholic school. It's a middle-class suburban neighbourhood with Catholic and Jewish residents in single-family houses. The local newspaper, *Highland Villager*, has persistently opposed the clinic.

One opposition group ran anti-clinic ads in local newspapers last autumn, listing

This billboard, 50 yards from the clinic, was rented by the Highland Branch of the Minnesota Citizens Concerned for Life



The St Paul clinic after the arson attack



Graffiti on the clinic walls



Launching Herstory

Feminist papers, publishing and radio projects, from seven European countries were represented at a conference in Paris on March 12. Women from *Cahiers du Griff* and *Becassine en Lutte* (Belgium), *Emma* (Germany — *Courage*, the other big German feminist magazine, was not invited), *Opzy* (Holland), *Effe* and *Radio Donna* (Italy), *Vindicacion Feminista* and *Dones de la Mar* (Spain), *Spare Rib* and *Sappho* all described different aspects of their projects in a public meeting of nearly two thousand women.

Questions of enormous interest were raised, particularly the relation between the militant and professional press, but they were all stifled by the ruling that

they couldn't be discussed until the debate later — which never happened. After four hours of fairly repetitive presentations, people couldn't wait to break up to dance or talk informally and look at all the stalls in the next room. Alone the woman from *Spare Rib* suggested breaking up into smaller groups instead of the formal meeting but this idea was so foreign to the spirit of the gathering — which was very individualist and preoccupied with professionalism — that it was scarcely heard and not discussed. So lots of controversial issues involving great political differences fell flat on their face and people felt frustrated.

The conference was mainly organised by a group planning a new weekly newspaper, *Histoire D'Elles*, who put out a dummy issue to do fund raising to launch

the paper in September. Although the strong factions within the French Women's Movement are very obvious (the press release actually spelt out which groups were *not* organising the conference!), questions about the political identity of this new group were discreetly evaded.

They did emphasise their desire to reach out beyond the Feminist Ghetto — a phrase used frequently during the day — but it wasn't clear how they intended to do this. Women left the meeting with intentions to keep more in touch with each other, to meet again in October — hopefully with more open discussion — and to think about setting up a feminist news network.□

Di, who lives in Paris

the names and phone numbers of clinic supporters. Those listed received obscene and threatening phone calls including threats to kidnap their children.

Obstruction

Soon after the building was purchased in April 1976, the St Paul city council passed a regulation to last six months which would stop anyone building or remodelling 'free standing abortion clinics'. In July a district court judge declared this ordinance unconstitutional. The St Paul mayor refused to let the council appeal

against this decision, but an anti-abortion group decided to finance an appeal, which is still pending.

This January, when the clinic opened, the Concerned Neighbours Coalition, a neighbourhood support group, invited local residents to inspect the premises. One hundred organised anti-abortionists appeared, shouting abuse at the Planned Parenthood workers: "Your mother should have aborted you"; "I hope you die of cancer"; and "I wish this building would burn down with you in it".

"Stop the attack on women's rights" was chosen as the theme for St Paul's International Women's Day March long before the fire. "When plans for the march began, we knew our rights were under attack," said an organiser. "But we had no idea it would escalate to an arson attack. We just hope it galvanises women into action." The march, on March 5, focussed specifically on the attack on the clinic.

Shaken Security

Anti-abortion organisations throughout the USA are better funded and better organised than those supporting a

woman's right to choose. Perhaps the false security women have felt since abortion was legalised will be shaken by this violence.

Early abortions were nationally declared legal in January 1973, but only 15% of hospitals provide abortion services. Contraception counselling has only recently been accepted as legal through state or federally funded agencies. And both newly elected President Jimmy Carter and his Secretary for Health, Education and Welfare Joseph Califano Jr are against abortion.

The Equal Rights Amendment is now in danger, and several bills have been introduced in Congress to amend the constitution to again make abortion illegal. Affirmative Action, which obliges firms to employ a quota of "minorities" — women, blacks etc — is being gradually eroded by unsympathetic court decisions. Child care and social security benefits for divorced women have been cut back. There's more and more hostility to women's rights — and the recent St Paul fire suggests that the dividing line between moral self-righteousness and extreme violence in this country remains tenuous.□

SEX (but no precautions)

The Independent Broadcasting Authority has refused to accept advertising for contraceptives. The television channel that brings you "Sheer Enjoyment" is not permitted to show ads for contraceptives. The IBA think they would be "embarrassing" — offensive to a large section of the public.

Suzie Hayman attacks the decision in a pamphlet for the Birth Control Trust, accusing the IBA of blatant hypocrisy. She advocates direct explanatory ads making it clear that contraception is not a medicine but a consumer product.

Maybe the IBA is afraid that ads for contraceptives would alienate their other advertisers. Mundane images of diaphragms and IUD's might undermine the sexist fantasies they rely upon. But it really comes down to yet another instance of censorship discriminating in favour of exploitation and against women taking control of their own bodies.□

"Advertising and Contraceptives" by Suzie Hayman available for 50p from the Birth Control Trust, 27/35 Mortimer Street, London W1.

ITALIAN RAPE

Many women will have read in the press about the massive protest by Italian feminists against the treatment by the courts of Claudia Catuti, raped in Rome, who has withstood intimidation and publicly come out against rape. We planned an article for this issue but for various reasons have to wait till next month. Telegrams of support to: Tina Lagostana, Bassi, Sala Avocati Tribunati, Tenali, Roma.

WORK NEWS

RED CIRCLE - an historical accident?

LUTON: Snoxell and Davies, women car parts inspectors, have won their case on appeal against Vauxhall motors.

Before the Sex Discrimination and Equal Pay Acts were passed, certain men at Vauxhall's were 'red circled', placed in a special category to preserve their higher rate of pay. (It is called 'red circling' when workers moved on to a job with a lower rate of pay take their previous higher rate with them - so they don't lose money, they are then paid more than the job is worth; a 'red circle' on the wage list shows it's not the real rate for the job.)

When the women first complained that by keeping men doing the same work as them on a higher rate, Vauxhalls were perpetuating a discriminatory practice, Bedford industrial tribunal ruled that the 'red circling' was a 'historical accident' and therefore OK. But that meant justifying sex discrimination now by another act of discrimination in the past! So the women appealed, backed by the Equal Opportunities Commission but not by their union, the TGWU. And they won.

"Unfortunately there will be no automatic repercussions in the rest of industry," commented Jean Coussins of the National Council of Civil Liberties. "It is now crucial that all the other women who believe they are trapped in a red circle situation take advantage of this decision."

This is a precedent only for cases 'red circled' before the Sex Discrimination Act came in - now women are supposed to have equal opportunities to be in the 'red circle' too. □

Jill Nicholls

RECORD RISES

BILSTON, STAFFS: Five women clerks at Hostess Furniture have won pay rises of between 74 and 133 per cent through the Central Arbitration Committee.

This "should feature in the Guinness Book of Records" says Dan Groves, divisional official of their union, the Association of Scientific, Technical and Managerial Staff. "It was a comparability issue. We were able to use the 1946 'Fair Wages Resolution' because

Striking against Yardley's..

Yardley's, which makes immense profits out of selling "beauty" to women, relying on women as consumers, have treated their female workforce with contempt. For six weeks 390 women at their factory in Basildon, Essex were on strike. But the strike collapsed because their union, the Transport and General Workers, refused to support them and make the strike official, and only eight men came out with the women.

Men who had been working with the women were moved a month before the Equal Pay Act came in force. The management then put the women on the shop floor onto the lowest grade, grade seven. Three men (the sweeper and the lift operators) were put on grade six, the rest on grade five and upwards.

The women's demand to be put on grade six with the sweeper was refused by an Equal Pay Tribunal on the grounds that the job required no initiative, no "complexity of judgment" and no experience, and that goods came off the belt at the low rate of 22 per minute.

In fact the job requires a great deal of dexterity, it's typical 'woman's work'. But what made the women extremely angry was the fact that goods come off the belt at a rate of 121 to 135 a minute! They claimed that as they were only paid for goods coming off at 22 a minute that was the rate they would work. They slowed down the belt, pan-

the firm were making furniture for education authorities, so the wages became comparable with local authority wages."

The women will earn from £36-40 a week, instead of £15-23, and will get £510-629 back pay, as the awards date from last July. □



demonium broke out, boxes and make up piled up and overflowed onto the floor. Management responded by stopping the belt and virtually locking them out for eight days, so the women came out on strike.

Overnight Wait

The union refused to act, so on March 21, after five weeks on strike with no money at all, the women went to Transport House. At first no-one would see them, but dockers already demonstrating there supported them. Finally an official agreed to "look into it". Not satisfied, the women went to Transport day, demanding to see their president, Jack Jones. They waited there overnight, for 21 hours, before he would see them. The union offered this package: the women would have to return to work, while their case went into arbitration; the union would negotiate with

management regarding pay for the eight days stoppage, and pay the women an unspecified proportion of the strike pay they would have received if the strike had been official.

On March 20 the women did return to work, mainly because few could afford to struggle any longer. Some are now in serious financial difficulties, and though they bravely claim they will strike again if they get no satisfaction through arbitration, their experience has soured them. They're disillusioned with the trade union leadership and the legislation, and feel bitter about the lack of support from the men working there, a few of whom demanded that the women either return to work or be given the sack. □

Gillian Anciano

Any money to: Branch Secretary Ms V James, 91 St Mary's Cres, Pitsea, Essex.

Smethwick: Nursery nurse Christella McCloskey was sacked for not smiling at work one day. A Birmingham industrial tribunal, told she was under orders to be constantly happy and cheerful, awarded her over £300 compensation for unfair dismissal. □

BIRMINGHAM: Seven women and two men at Precision Press, Halesowen, won equal pay on March 21 after a five week strike. The seven women, all members of TASS, staff section of the engineering union, returned to work with a £7.50 rise. □

...and Trust Houses Forte

The strike at The Randolph, Oxford's four-star prestige hotel (see SR 55) drags into its fifth month. It started on November 29, over recognition of the Transport and General Workers Union. As a result of attempts to bring about recognition, five chambermaids were threatened with the sack unless they agreed to work weekends — which the manager knew would be impossible, as the women were all married with children and could only work weekdays. Several other union members came out on strike in their support — two kitchen porters, two garage staff and eleven chambermaids.

The Randolph is owned by Trust Houses Forte, with which the T&G has had many long battles over union recognition. Bert Ray, head of the Food, Drink and Tobacco section of the T&G, says this is because Charles and Rocco Forte, father and son owners of THF, personally dislike unions and will go to extraordinary lengths to prevent them gaining any foothold.

This has meant a long hard winter for the Randolph strikers — all of whom have been sacked for coming out on strike. THF is an enormous business, with an almost complete monopoly on the catering industry in this country — Jo Lyons is one recent addition to their ranks. And they have the backing of such organisations as the extreme right wing National Association For Freedom. So they have been able to conduct the dispute on a national level, while the T&G has kept it to a regional level, for fear of court injunctions being slapped on them.

Two other THF establishments are now on strike for the same reason — Sheffield's Grosvenor House Hotel and Birmingham's Night Out Club. Complete blacking of all THF hotels and subsidiaries can be imposed in the regions where there are disputes — this is the only way any of these strikes will be won. So far T&G support has been patchy, with some local officials reluctant to give more than token backing to the strikers, though meetings on March 23 with union leaders in London were hopeful.

Constant Reminder

No normal deliveries are now being made to the hotel, but THF use a hired van to bring

in supplies, many of which are dropped off at other THF hotels in the area. The manager, Malcolm Reed, admits a loss of 10-15% trade, so we can assume at least 20%. Nevertheless, with the high rate of unemployment in Oxford, the hotel has no difficulty recruiting replacements, and they're still doing enough business to give new workers the impression that the picket outside is having no effect. But the picket is a constant reminder to the public that the dispute is still on, and does in fact succeed in turning away a fairly constant stream of people every day.

There have been talks between union officials and management, and once recently between the strikers themselves and the management, with hotel staff present. Each time the manager has treated requests for recognition of the union and reinstatement of sacked workers (with compensation for loss of earnings) as ludicrous and quite impossible.

These strikes are seen as crucial to the future of unionisation in the catering industry as a whole, which is why THF is holding out so obdurately and why the blacking of THF and subsidiaries *must* be effective. □

Cathy Sheloch

Cathy is one of the Randolph strikers — she adds: Please don't use any THF hotel, preferably letting the management know why if you make a cancellation. Every bit of pressure put on THF as a whole will help us. We're also hard up for money as the strikers get only £6 a week hardship pay; donations please to Margaret Radbourne, 41 Bridge Street, Osney, Oxford.



Picketing for equal pay outside Yardley's, Basildon

Skirts Still Rule

LEEDS: Marianne Schmidt, the shop assistant who was sacked by Austick's Bookshop because she refused to comply with a rule that women employees should wear skirts (see SR 57) has lost her case.

She claimed Austick's were breaking the Sex Discrimination Act, as there's no rule about dress for male employees. (Had there been a rule stating 'no men can wear skirts' she could not legally have complained.) Also only women had to wear overalls.

The Tribunal found that only the overalls rule was discriminatory, but as she was dismissed because of the trousers not the overalls, they couldn't rule on the overalls question (cunning eh?). Men and women are not comparable, they said, because men can't wear skirts at work.

The Tribunal came out with things like: "If we find in Ms Schmidt's favour, as sure as night follows day a man will bring a case alleging discrimination because he

cannot wear a skirt" (so what?). But anyway Marianne is asking to be allowed to dress in a way that is socially acceptable for women in Britain today. □ from WIRES

Heavy odds

LONDON: Women working in betting shops should earn the same as male clerks, even if they're not expected to stand by as bouncers.

The Employment Appeals Tribunal ruled that Sandra Shields should not get 14p an hour less than the man she worked with. If he was expected to do occasional strong-arm duties, that was simply because he was a man — "It's impossible to escape the conclusion that the money differential rests on sex." □

IN BURY, LANCASHIRE the health authority suggested pregnancy tests for women applying for hospital jobs. The excuse was that applicants have to have a medical including an X-ray, which could harm an unborn child. But they admitted that a pregnant woman might have less chance of a job. □

Talks-Conferences

Women & Politics

April 27. 7-9pm talk at the Poly of North London, Highbury Grove, London N5. One of ten open evenings in a weekly women's studies series. Speaker: Sally Alexander.

Women's Engineering

April 27. 2-9pm Career Convention at the City University, New Hall, Northampton Square, London EC1, for schools in the London area. "The intention is to promote engineering careers in all disciplines and at all levels". Details from The Women's Engineering Society,

25 Foubert's Place, London W1V 2AL (01-437 5212 X26)

Teaching Girls To Be Women April 30. 10am-4pm first in a series of day conferences sponsored by Essex County Council in the University Lecture Theatre Block (LTB2), University of Essex, Colchester. Speakers and workshop discussions covering historical background, sex roles in the classroom, curricular choice, and the transition from school to work. Creche and accommodation available. Fee £1 (50p for those in full time education). Details from (0206-44144 X2375).

Dorothea Lange's Photography May 4. 6.15pm talk at Fyvie

need workers and work to help build the press. Details from 16A Iliffe Yard (off Crampton St), London SE17 (01-701 8314).

Women & Mental Health

Is a new self-help group of women who totally reject the concept of 'mental illness' and want to specifically deal with the question of mental health within the context of the women's liberation movement. "By challenging society's ideas of mental health, we are attacking the roots of our oppression as women". Contact Sarah, 34 Ashmore Rd, London W9 (01-969 6696)

Hall, PCL, 309 Regent St., London W1. Speaker: Prof Margaret Harker. Organised by the American Studies Resources Centre of the PCL (01-580 2020 X111)

1910 Women Chainmakers' Strike In The Black Country May 6. 7.30 at the London School of Economics, St Clements Building (room S421), Houghton St, London WC2. Film and discussion introduced by Sarah Boston. Organised by the Feminist History Group, 18 Lillieshall Rd, London SW4

Feminist History

May 20. 7.30 meeting at the Women's Research and Resources Centre, 158 North Gower St, London NW1. Work-in-progress discussion. All women researching or interested in feminist history are welcome. Organised by the Feminist History Group, as above.

SW Region Women's Liberation Conference

May 21. 10am-5pm at The Gables, Spaxton Village (nr Bridgwater), Somerset. Creche and accommodation available. For information and suggestions for workshops contact Jill Jones, c/o The Gables as above (Spaxton 274) or Fiona Ellis (Combwich 652135).

Women & Work 1977

May 28. Conference at the YWCA, Great Russell St, London WC1. Intended particularly for women in trade unions. Topics include recent legislation affecting women at work, ghettos of women's work, courses for women workers by the Workers' Educational Association. Details from Lucy Mannheim or Fred Osborne at the WEA, 32 Tavistock Square, London WC1.

Talking With Women

May 28. 10am-4.30pm; 7-9pm conference in Knightswood Community Centre, Alderman Rd, Glasgow G13. "Of interest to those connected with

community projects, discussion groups and TV education involving women, as well as those in further and adult education." Bring handouts, course outlines, video tapes, references. Creche and accommodation, coffee and buffet lunch provided. Cost £1.20 (50p claimants). Registration: Jenny Beale, Alison West, WEA, 212 Bath St, Glasgow G2 4HW (041-332 0176)

Paris International Socialist Women's Conference

May 28-30. "Aimed at women active in various struggles (equal pay, redundancy, women's aid, rape community struggles...)" Papers welcome, particularly on Women's Aid refuges, as the French and Italian sisters are attempting to set up refuges. Donations, offers of help, papers as soon as possible to the Planning Group, Michael Ann Mullen, 7 Archibald Rd, London N7.

Women in Guinea Bissau

May 30. 6.30 talk at the Institute of Race Relations, 247 Pentonville Rd, London N19 NG (01-837 0041). Speaker: Stephanie Urdang (one of the editors of *Southern Africa*).

Amsterdam International Feminist Socialist Workshops June 3-5. This Conference is being planned as a result of "an unfortunate difference of opinion which occurred" during one of the planned meetings for the Paris conference, as above. "No feminism without socialism; no socialism without feminism": every woman, who is interested in this broad theme, is welcome. Donations, offers of help, papers as soon as possible to Barbara Yates, 20B Batoum Gardens, London W6.

only. Details from Sarah (01-249 3768).

May 11. 7.30 meeting at Clapham Manor Baths, Clapham Manor Rd, London SW4. Organised by SW London NAC and *Women's Voice*. With theatre group Pirate Jenny (01-960 5875) performing *Bouncing Back With Benyon*.

May 13. Evening meeting, at the Old Theatre, London School of Economics, Houghton St, London WC2 on abortion internationally. Speakers from Spain, Italy, Chile, Belgium.

May 14. National Demonstration to defeat the Benyon Bill and for safe, legal abortion — a woman's right to choose. Assemble at 1.30pm Belvedere Rd, London SE1, and via

Women's Writing

Women Writing, Printing, Publishing

After a workshop on this theme at the Women's Liberation Conference, the women wanted some continuing link. Anyone with ideas, suggestions for projects can use Women's Press, 4A Peckham Rd, London SE5 as a contact centre.

Women in Print

They are a coop of women printers, printing off-set Litho up to A3, for the women's movement and the left. They



From *Radical Science Journal* 5/1977

Campaigns

Abortion

April 30. Demonstrate with SE London National Abortion Campaign (NAC) for a woman's right to choose and against the Benyon Abortion (Amendment) Bill. Assemble 2pm in Catford Broadway and march to rally and street theatre in Lewisham. Information and offers of help: Linda (01-318 0834).

May 7. 2-6pm conference on 'Abortion and Feminism' at the Factory, Matthias Rd, London N16. Introduced by Victoria Greenwood, co-author of *Abortion In Demand* (SR55) and a NAC speaker. Women

Publications

Mama!
A collective of women based in Birmingham have gathered together a very useful selection of British feminist writing on art since 1971. They've included summaries of the work of different groups, exhibition reviews and articles by individuals criticising the role of art in society and describing how their art relates to their lives as women.

A number of the articles are from Monica Sjoo's pamphlets and from writing generated by Feministo, the Women's Postal Event. At the end there's a list of women's groups and relevant books, journals or pamphlets.

The collective plan to produce more issues but first they have to clear a large production debt — so buy a copy of *Mama!* today.

Available c/o Birmingham Women's Artists Group, Flat 2,

20 Valentine Rd, Kings Heath, Birmingham 14. Price 65p inc. postage. Rozsika Parker

Shrew — the Goddess
"We are indeed investigating women-based culture as part of a search into our cultural past, but also, and equally important as a kind of vision of a society in which women could be truly free." Articles cover searches for the Goddess and her symbols (in Ancient Egypt, the bible . . . in trees, sacred groves, stone circles and energy lines), and musings on matriarchy and patriarchy.

Shrew, Spring 77. 30p from A Woman's Place, 42 Earlham St, London WC2

People's Power
Most of this issue is on the second conference of the Organisation Of Mozambican Women (OMM). Many women felt that after the war they were forced back into their traditional roles and that OMM needed to "devise structures which would permanently integrate women into the forces building socialism". A wide range of issues were discussed and many resolutions made around them: illiteracy, superstition, tribalism, single mothers, adultery, prostitution.

People's Power No. 6, Jan/Feb 77 is available from MAGIC, 12 Little Newport St, London WC2. Price 30p + postage. Barbara Charles

Feminist Books
The 1977 catalogue includes basic feminist literature on education, sexual politics, the law, health as well as women's poetry. There is a 25% discount on bulk orders (£5 or more) for women's groups.

Catalogue and order form from Feminist Books, PO Box HP 5, Leeds LS6 1LN, York.

Rape Crisis Report
The Rape Crisis Centre have published their first annual report, available from them at PO Box 42, London N6 5BU for 30p + postage. Full account in next month's *Spare Rib*.

Non-Sexist Teaching Materials & Approaches
Even though the 'approaches' bit is positively lacking (the last page promises it for vol 2), compulsive reference and bibliography readers will revel in the 'materials' section, which is comprehensive.

Non-Sexist Teaching Materials & Approaches is available from New Childhood

Press, c/o Photography Workshop, 152 Upper St, London N1. Price £1 + 17p postage.



From *Non-Sexist Teaching Materials And Approaches*

Centres

Camden
A series of meetings for women, in the Camden area, who want to find out more about the women's liberation movement. At Camden Women's Centre, Rosslyn Lodge, Lyndhurst Rd, London NW3.
April 28. 8.30 *EGA Stays OK* (see Film), film and discussion on the occupation of the Elisabeth Garrett Anderson hospital for women.
May 12. 8.30 talk on the function of rape crisis centres.

Hornsey
May 4. 8pm at Hornsey

Trafalgar Square and Oxford St, march to a rally in Hyde Park at 4.30. Help publicise the march; contact the National Abortion Campaign, 30 Camden Rd, London NW1 (01-485 4303)

Which Way For The Charter Campaign?
May 21/22. Conference at the City University, St John St, London EC1. Creche. Fee £1.50 for delegates (observers £1 or 50p a day). Details from the Working Women's Charter Campaign, 1A Camberwell Grove, London SE5 (01-701-4173).

Women's Aid
May 7/8. National conference. If you can help contact your local Women's Aid group or (01-586 0104).

Women's Centre, 147 Archway Rd, London N6. Monthly open meeting. Speaker from the Campaign for Financial and Legal Independence. Discussion and coffee.

May 14. 8pm at 155 Archway Rd, London N6. Social event. Entrance 30p (includes food). Music, chat. Bring bottle.

Film

Riddles Of The Sphinx
May 13. 7pm at The Other Cinema, 25 Tottenham St, London W1 (01-637 9308)
A new film directed by Laura Mulvey and Peter Wollen. In its longest section the film tells the story of a woman with a nursery age daughter, thrown (when her husband leaves her) from psychological dependence on motherhood into the world of work, day-care problems and different relationships. Like *Penthesilea* (their first film, SR30) *Riddles Of The Sphinx* also examines an ancient myth in the light of its meaning for women today, and works with an explicitly formal aesthetic.

EGA Stays OK
A 25 min 16mm colour film made by the Newsreel Collective and the EGA campaign. The Elisabeth Garrett Anderson hospital is run by women for women. It has been occupied by the staff to ensure that it stays open. The film documents the struggle to save the hospital by the

EGA workers and the trade unions. *EGA Stays OK* is made by trade unionists for trade unionists and all groups fighting the cuts in the NHS. Ring 01-794 2825 if you want to use it.

Plays

Blisters
Devised and directed by Sarah Pia Anderson and Sheila Kelley, and designed by Gemma Jackson, *Blisters* is set in a back to back in Bradford, and the Butlin's ballroom at Filey near Scarborough. It's mother's first holiday for years, and for daughter, it's all the glamour and glitter of the amateur ballroom dancing contest: see her dance the Victoria tango through Gemma Jackson's acid yellow set; laugh at the action through your tears.
Until 30 April. 8pm, Tues-Sun, at the Bush Theatre, Shepherd's Bush Green, London W12 (01-743 5050). Tickets £1.
May 1-7. At Hull Arts Centre.
May 14-June 4. At Crucible Studio, Sheffield

Natasha Morgan

Vinegar Tom
Performed by Monstrous Regiment, written by Caryl Churchill and directed by Pam Brighton, *Vinegar Tom* is set in 17th century England and looks at people's history through women's eyes.
May 18-22. 7.30 at The Oval, Kennington, London SE11.

May 25. At Lowestoft Theatre Centre.

Lesbian Mothers
May 27/28. At the Women's Art Alliance, 10A Cambridge Terrace Mews, London NW1. A play by Gay Sweatshop. Friday performance (8pm) mixed; Saturday (5pm and 8pm) women and children only. Creche for all performances. Tickets 65p.

Art

Feministo — Postal Event
From June 20. Exhibition at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, The Mall, London SW1 of the artworks, that women have been sending to each other, communicating their anger, sadness, cynicism at being a housewife. "Please would all women who have been making and sending artworks in this Postal Event, send the works they have received to Phil Goodall, 14 Valentine Rd, Kings Heath, Birmingham B14, by May 31."

Exhibition

Women In History — Work 1830-1918
Until May 15. At Central Library, Bancroft Rd, London E3. The exhibition will be available on loan to schools, community groups, libraries. Contact the National Museum of Labour History, Limehouse Town Hall, Commercial Rd, London E14 (01-515 3229)

NEWS

PRICES PROTEST

Butter and margarine up 40%
... vegetables up 37% ...
coffee and tea up 36% ...
milk, cheese and eggs up
24% ...

These figures on price rises in the year ending January 1977 (from the Department of Employment Gazette) confirm what anyone who goes shopping already knows: as real wages trail downwards, prices rise relentlessly.

In Yorkshire, women in the Co-op, the Labour Party and the Communist Party met three months ago to plan a 'Campaign Against Rising Prices' (CARP). From an initial public meeting an organising committee was elected; since then a CARP spokeswoman has appeared on local television, and CARP supporters are circulating a petition, sponsored by the main trade unions in the area, as well as by the Co-op, Labour councillors and the CP.

The petition itself is deliberately general: "We register our protest against the continuous rise in prices and urge firm action by the government." So far response has been good — over 5,000 signatures have been collected on the streets and in workplaces in Sheffield and Doncaster.

The campaign was initiated by women but aims to involve men too. Men as well as women are on the committee, and men have also been out petitioning. But in the shopping centres the most enthusiastic response is from women.

The petition is a way of getting CARP off the ground. "But will it do any good?" some people asked. That depends on how much support it gets, and CARP still needs to work out what sort of action to plan in the long term, beyond sending a deputation to the Prices Minister and lobbying MPs. If enough people get involved CARP could develop towards challenging the idea that allowing our living standards to fall is a necessary solution to the economic crisis. □

Jenny Owen

Delegates voting vigorously for an extension of the role and power of the Equal Opportunities Commission

"It would be nice to say we don't need this conference"

About 250 women and a sprinkling of men, representing 52 unions — two days of speakers for and against motions, touching on women's active participation in unions, equal pay and opportunities, sex discrimination, the cuts, maternity leave, childcare facilities, training, protective legislation, abortion, child benefits, home-workers ... it's the Women's TUC Conference.

It was held in Weymouth, "a dump", I was told by a local schoolgirl. "Everybody's on SS here in winter." Inside the pavilion, the delegates also talked about unemployment, and how it's women who often come out worst; they are the first to lose their jobs, and often become "the unpaid nurses of the health service", looking after the aged and the sick at home as hospitals are closed down. (Judith Gray — Medical Practitioners Union).

In the same vein the conference condemned the "savage cuts in public expenditure leading to extensive withdrawal of pre-school day-care facilities, which are essential provisions for working parents", and called for a trade union campaign to extend free pre-school day care and educational facilities. "Local campaigns are important but we need to weld them together through trade

union support" a Southwark Trades Council representative said.

"A woman must have the right to choose whether she wants to spend 21 years bearing and rearing children — I did it, and that's why this is only my first conference." Jenny Lewis (Confederation of Health Service Employees) was speaking in support of the TUC Women's Advisory Committee motion condemning "the present moves in parliament to wreck the Abortion Act 1967", and calling on the government "to make financial provision for the extension of NHS facilities for abortion". Nobody spoke against the motion, and there was a strong feeling of support when Judy Newcombe (Hackney Trades Council) urged trade unionists to back the national demonstration against Benyon's restrictive abortion bill on May 14. This

was cheering after the incident during the social, the night before ... Some of us went round collecting signatures condemning the bill — how better to spend the evening when a co-op fashion show doesn't grab you. But Ethel Chipcase, TUC women's officer, soon put an end to the petitioning, claiming this wasn't the place or time: people were enjoying themselves. Hum.

Brush Off for Len

Anger was expressed about the government's Child Benefit's con: "We want the full scheme, not the compromise we're saddled with now." A motion was carried unanimously.

The equal pay legislation was discussed at some length. "It doesn't work you know" — Dorothy Parkin (National Union of Dyers, Bleachers and Textile Workers) summed up



ANGELA PHILLIPS (IFL)



Len Murray — "not shouted down, just ignored"

what many women there had been thinking for months. Pat Turner (General And Municipal Workers Union) proposed to amend the Act. "The legislation should support union collective bargaining endeavours, not weaken them": unions, as well as individuals, should have the right to claim equal pay from a tribunal, on behalf of a group of their members.

The awareness of discrimination was acute among delegates. Even the Women's Advisory Committee supported a call from Equity to revise the Social Security System in line with the spirit of the Sex Discrimination Act. And when Judith Hunt (TASS) put her motion demanding that seven of the 38 seats on the TUC General Council be reserved for women, instead of the existing two, a roar of approval came from the floor. Len Murray did not approve. He argued, moving his arms in a fatherly fashion, that the motion should be remitted into the trust of the General Council. The idea would be taken into account when the Council was being restructured. He was not shouted down — just ignored. The motion was carried.

The now classical plea to abolish the Women's TUC Conference "in the light of the fact that women can now claim equal rights with men" didn't go down well either. Speakers against expressed the need for a broad forum where women from different unions can discuss the specific problems they face in the unions and at work: "It would be nice to say we don't need this conference. Unfortunately we're not there yet. Every resolution so far proves it. We must use the conference to give women the means to fight against discrimination. It's a training ground. You don't abolish women's inequality by abolishing the Women's TUC Conference." □ Anny Brackx

CHILDCARE CLOWNS

SOUTHWARK: Surprised shoppers in East Street had their routine disrupted on Saturday March 19 by the antics of two vividly painted clowns. The clowns, female for a change, were there to ask people to a day event organised by Southwark Trades Council

Below the high arched roof of St Albans Hall were stalls and exhibitions on the need for nurseries — the Westway Nursery Group catalogued their successful campaign to set up a nursery centre in West London;



women lawyers gave advice about our rights at work.

Both the Equal Opportunities Commission and the TUC made unusual but welcome sorties from their Headquarters, and several unions had stalls. Toni Arthur of BBC's 'Playaway' opened the event, and after her songs small children went off to a side room to paint, climb, play and listen to stories.

The Trades Council recently prepared a document about child care provision in Southwark: there are about 13,000 children under five in the borough, of whom 508 are looked after by registered child-minders and only 383 have local authority places. Most nursery school places are part-time only and so of little use. The Trades Council is campaigning for:

- more free state nurseries and nursery schools, with flexible opening hours
 - nurseries on all new estates
 - community control of nurseries
 - holiday and after-school care for older children.
- Through events like the Child Care Day they hope to get more local people involved. □

Information from Lynda Haddock, Southwark Trades Council Women's Committee

KNOCKING BACK THE BITTER

"Wife Beater's Bitter" was the name a Norwich publican gave to his particularly strong brand of local beer. Warned that the name might be considered offensive, Peter Turner merely shrugged his shoulders.

The Golden Star pub was picketed in protest and a delegation including women from Leeway, the nearby battered women's refuge, demanded that the name be changed. The publican finally gave in and re-christened the beer "Triple X".

Beer has always been marketed as a man's drink and to be a Real Man still seems to mean knocking back the bitter

and knocking out the wife. So maybe it *was* a joke but as one woman asked would "Baby Batterer's Bitter" raise a laugh and boost sales? □

BRICKED-UP REFUGE

CARDIFF Women's Aid, who have given shelter to 145 battered women and 269 children since August 1975, have been told by the council that no houses are available for an urgently needed second refuge.

"Any house which may become available in the future belonging to the City Council will have been bricked-up or boarded-up for some considerable time. I have no authority to spend City Council money on repairs and I believe it is true to say that you do not have any money available." □

BRADFORD WITCH HUNT

The police are cracking down on the gay community in Bradford, one of the strongest in the country. In three months over 3,000 gays were interviewed by the police: lesbians and homosexual men were seized and interrogated late at night, taken from their place of work without warning, photographed and fingerprinted against their will, and denied access to solicitors. The police also surveilled gay people's homes and raided gay organisations . . . All this, they claim, in order to sniff out clues concerning the murder on November 12 last year, of an eleven-year-old boy scout.

"It was a pretext," said Alan Richardson, "a plot to build up the deviants' list." Indeed the police have boasted that they could now make over a thousand arrests on information from people who thought they were involved in a murder inquiry. The 'offences' concern love

affairs and relationships involving gay men between sixteen and twenty one. The Campaign For Homosexual Equality were apparently told that nothing would happen if gays kept 'quiet' and didn't make trouble about the investigation.

The press was of course eager and on the 'right' side, supporting Dr Ellis, Bradford's police surgeon, and Conservative councillors, in their insinuations about a vice ring involving young boys making money in public lavatories.

Bradford gays then formed the Campaign To Stop The Witch Hunting Of Lesbians And Homosexual Men, and 250 people marched silently through Bradford on February 26. "People were amazed," said Lyndal Stein, a member of the campaign. "I think it definitely squashed the vice ring rumours, and the slur campaign in the press also stopped."

In fact the chief constable has recently stated publicly that there is no cause for concern. □ Anny Brackx

Contact the Campaign on 0274 35284.

During the early hours of Wednesday morning April 6, A Woman's Place at 42 Earlham Street, London WC2 was broken into. The duplicator and the files containing information about the Women's Liberation Movement were also taken. This note was left: "This movement suffers from a disease of words — whatever happened to action — Boadicea rules OK." □



WORK NEWS

daffodils, cards ~and wages



"All of us are housewives and mothers — we do the work of mothering other people. We're tired of doing it for free." Suzie Fleming of Bristol Wages for Housework Campaign was addressing about 100 women and a BBC camera crew in London's Gate Cinema on March 20, Mothers' Day. We'd all come in free, and

been given a daffodil each.

"Few of us can get time off even on Mother's Day. We appreciate the cards and the flowers but they're just not enough — we want a wage for our work," she went on, showing a stack of petitions for a higher family allowance and wages for housework which were taken to Mr Healey at the end of the afternoon. Then the cameras went away and there were songs and their film *About Time* (see review p42).

*"We'd have some money and some wages too
Ain't it amazing what wages do . . ."*

The speeches that followed referred to the Iceland strike, where women withdrew their labour for one day with the slogan "When women stop, everything stops", and explained the campaign's position: all women are housewives — gay and straight, black and white, married, single, prostitute — and all women's work is essentially housework; as housework is a labour of love, so all women's work is low paid and low status. If housewives were paid by the state they'd have higher status and more bargaining power — they could refuse their work.

The liveliest speech came from Caroline Barker, also from Bristol, who'd left her husband seven weeks before. "I'm no longer supported by him, but I no longer support him. Now at least the money I have is mine to control. If the kids and I want to live off Easter eggs for three days, then we'll do that and there's nothing anyone can do about it. I go to bed at night and just go to sleep — it's wonderful! . . . I was too exhausted to stay married."

Living on social security wasn't nearly as bad as she'd expected — "OK, it has its hassles but it's much easier than it would have been ten years ago because of all the indivi-

dual confrontations and victories there have been. It's amazing when you get your first pay cheque, with a note stating it's money 'to which you are entitled' . . . As more women leave their marriages they'll have to pay us more, and I think they'll have to pay women to live with men!"

The few speakers from the floor toned this down, pointing out that there's still sex-snooping and the constant threat of having your money cut off — "You never know what's on your files". And of course there's a social stigma against 'sponging off the state', which is hard for an isolated single mother to deal with.

But "they'll have to pay women to stay with men" went unchallenged. The assumption was that no woman would choose to live with a man if she could afford not to. Assuming that, Wages for Housework means money for women so they can live apart from men, bring up their children in their own homes and not have to do jobs they don't like (the assumption being that women go out to work only for money; given the chance they'd stay home.)

That's what speakers at the meeting implied, but it can

come across rather differently — "We appreciate the cards, the flowers, the love, but we want the money too." This need not challenge woman's role as wife, housewife and mother, or the way housework is organised. Wages for Housework campaigners do question the idea that housework and childcare is 'naturally' woman's work, and that the family is the best place for it — they see a wage as the way to start changing this. But they sometimes suggest that if the economics change, the rest will follow and don't face up to the way Wages for Housework can be used by people who don't want women's situation to change.

Used Against Us?

A Finnish nursery worker, at the meeting with three Swedish women, had a familiar left-feminist reaction against the idea: "I am amazed that you are campaigning for women to stay at home. In Sweden where I live, the right-wing government is trying to get women to accept money to do that. In the crisis they want the men to have the jobs. The women's liberation move-

ment is united against this. It's the *last* thing women want. It's a way of keeping us out of society. You have to have the right to have a job. The right-wing is saying that women are only fit to look after a family."

In Sweden the women's movement has a long history — there are far more nurseries than in Britain, though still not enough for all children; abortion is free on demand, though there's often delay; divorce is easier; most women have jobs outside the home, and the women's movement struggles against traditional definitions of what women can do. One of their demands is a six-hour day for everyone — this would mean fewer unemployed and create the conditions for men as well as women to take responsibility for children and housework.

Selma James of Wages for Housework shouted back that conservative governments are being forced to pay up a few pennies only because of the international struggle of women for more time and money. Women are laid off first, she repeated, because they will do the same service work at home for free. If we were paid for it at home, these jobs would be *more* secure. But the women from Sweden felt that many social service jobs would then be deemed unnecessary — they could be left to mother at home, not seen as a social responsibility.

I left with a headache — and my daffodil.□

Jill Nicholls

Janet Krengell plans to start a government retraining course in bricklaying in September. She took a job as building labourer to get necessary 'on-site' experience of the work. This was after months of trying, and discouragement from the Labour Exchange.

The work was building conversion — demolishing ceilings, walls, floors, mixing concrete, carpentry and putting up ceilings. "It was an appalling job — incredibly bad money. It was £45 for 47½ hours and you brought home £31 if you worked a full week. You should get extra money for dirty work, certain heights, and special equipment, clothing, masks — but there was nothing like that." Turnover was high and Janet was an 'oldie' after two months.

She did the same work as the men, after a struggle as they tried to give her less heavy work. "It's really not the work that's heavy at all, the work's very nice — it's being a woman in that situation."

Janet was attacked for working too hard and going too fast. "I felt dreadful about that because it put me in such a contradictory position. I was really into it. I was much more motivated than anyone else there. But I took a lot of trouble to explain that it was different for me, and if I slowed up I was much more likely to get the sack than them."

Her employer was a West Indian contractor called Gladstone Taylor. About 60 people work for him. "Most of the men on the site were black, mostly very paternal, older and really nice, though they came out with a lot of stuff that had to be talked through. Most took a lot of trouble to teach me things. It was the young studs who were a drag."

"Not My Type"

The foreman warned the men they should treat Janet like a man. "Let it be like all men, he said — they would get sacked if they treated me badly. But obviously they didn't treat me like a man."

"Unless you have a long discussion it's very difficult. It's boring to say I want to be treated like a person — it seems like evading the issue. People see you as a freak and there is a constant barrage of sexism. It's amazing the lengths people will go to to separate you from the women they know at home... and then there's the guy who seriously said that a woman could never be a bricklayer



Janet Krengell

Builder Sacked for Swearing

In May last year, Janet Krengell got a job on a building site in North London. After two months she was sacked for swearing. Under the Sex Discrimination Act she took the case to an industrial tribunal, which sat for one day in December and two days in March. Judgement is due soon, but Janet expects to lose her case.

because she would become deformed in her body!"

After two weeks, another woman, Miriam Yagud, got a job there. The situation changed. "They can accept one of you as a little mascot, but not two. They used to play us off against one another, like coming up to me and saying 'Gosh your friend is such a good worker,' and the same to her — and we did to some degree get competitive. Though we realised what was happening, it did pick up on our paranoia about not being good enough. If ever we were seen having a break or a fag together we were put on separate jobs, which never happened to anyone else."

Janet notes a pub conversation with Taylor when he admitted worrying that his men would be thinking about sex all the time, and said his mates made fun of him for employing women.

In July, in the course of an argument about holiday pay, Janet is said to have called

Taylor a "fucking bastard". He says he sacked her for it.* There was a high level of swearing on the site. "Taylor gets upset about swearing but he never sacked anyone for it... people sacked while I was there had done real heavy things like draw a knife on the foreman. I was very obviously upset, just expressing real frustration — it was extraordinary that he sacked me."

The next day, when Janet came to collect her week's money, there was an incident in which the foreman tried to throw her and a friend forcibly off the site and the police had to be called. The foreman responded with "Right, that proves it. I'll never employ women again. They're just troublemakers... She never was my type anyway."

* In fact Janet says she didn't use these words until after he'd sacked her.

Studying Swearwords

The tribunal consisted of two

men — a QC and a CBI member — and a woman trade unionist. Only the woman seemed sympathetic. A woman barrister, Madelaine Colvin, and solicitor Sally Gilbert put her case. There was no complaint about Janet's ability to do the work, and the three days were mainly spent examining swearwords. The men giving evidence against her claimed unbelievable naivety about the meaning and usage of such language on site, and expressed surprise that these should be used by women.

Janet said of the hearing — "I felt really appalled by the unfair hearing you get... we were constantly interrupted and told that our evidence was irrelevant which didn't happen to the other side. The law certainly shouldn't put the burden of proof on you. We had far more evidence than them — had gone into it deeply because of its importance to us. Taylor came over as a real good guy; he said 'How could I have discriminated against Miss Krengell — if I'd meant to discriminate against her I'd have done it in the first six days and I certainly wouldn't have employed Miss Yagud as well.'"

Another point taken up by the panel against paying compensation was that although Janet had unsuccessfully tried for many labouring jobs since being sacked, she should have taken the office jobs offered by the Labour Exchange. For Janet this was like giving up, and she needed the work experience... and would they have said the same to a man?

The case demonstrates some of the difficulties of proving discrimination against a background of continuing stereotypes about women. Janet comments "The Act does not allow for attitudes or intentions, and sees no further than someone has been sacked for swearing... and I know I was sacked because I was a woman swearing — he was looking for an excuse to get rid of me because I was an embarrassment."

Janet would probably have won if it had been a case simply of 'unfair dismissal', but for that you have to have been employed for six months. She hopes to appeal if the decision goes against her. □ Sue Sharpe

Janet is a member of a group of women in men's jobs that meets at Essex Road Women's Centre, London N1. They talk to girls at school and plan to make a film soon; more about their group in a future SR.

WHAT EVERY WOMAN SHOULD KNOW ABOUT VIBRATORS

As the first company to introduce vibrators into the U.K. and having sold some hundred of thousands, we feel that we know more about them and their use than most.

The most important thing to remember is, **that they do work** — providing the woman has no violent prejudice against the use of artificial sexual stimulation. Some women find the shape off-putting. The phallic symbolism, deliberately created by the makers to emphasize its sexual usage, gives them the impression that it is meant to be used as an artificial penis, and indeed it can and is so used. Some women, however, find the effect — when used in this way — to be more numbing than stimulating.

The vibrator is designed and is far more effective when used for clitoral stimulation and its undoubted value for this purpose has been well established by Masters and Johnson in their book "An Analysis of Human Sexual Response." In the book they describe how, using a similar device, they were able to bring to orgasm women who have never before reached a climax.

These were extreme cases obviously. Normally, the vibrator is used to provide extra stimulation during love making and is particularly useful where the woman's response tends to be slow. And, of course, it is just as often used purely for personal pleasure.

Finally a word about quality. There are many different makes on the market today, all of similar design, ranging in quality from very good to absolutely useless. We have been selling the same model for seven years and have enough confidence in it to offer you our special 'money refund' service if you are not satisfied.

If you want to experiment with your own personal vibrator, just complete the coupon below.

Please send me a Harmony Personal Vibrator. I enclose Cheque/P.O. / Cash for £4.50 (including postage and packing)

Name:

Address:

Please
PRINT
Clearly

Pellen Personal Products Ltd.,
Dept SR
1a West Green Road, London, N.15

classified events



● **ROCK AGAINST RACISM: MAYDAY KARNIVAL:** Roundhouse, May 1st with Aswad, Carol Grimes + The London Boogie Band with Paul Jones, Generation X, Kartoon Klowns, Raw Funk, Steel + Skin. 5.00-10.30 £1.50 (75p claimants)

● **NAC/ALRA BENEFIT: TRICO** play and disco (40p each, 70p together) Friday 6th May 7.30pm St Clement's Building, L.S.E., Houghton St, WC2

● **LONDON HOMEWORKING CAMPAIGN** Fundraising Social Friday 6 May 8.00pm, The Cambridge Pub, 48 Newman Street, W1. 50p entrance.

● **"TIBET"** — Film by Felix Greene. 14th May. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, WC1 — Tube Holborn. 7pm. 60p. Society for Anglo-Chinese Understanding.

● **NEW ARCHITECTURE MOVEMENT:** Conference on Trade Union organisation in Architecture and the Allied Professions. London, 14 May, 10-6pm. Full fee £3.50 (employed) £2.50 (claimants) includes food. Details NAM, 9 Poland Street, London W1. Applications by 4 May.

courses conferences etc

● **11 SEMINARS ON CENSORSHIP:** Films 28 April; Broadcasting 5 May, 12 May; Music 19 May; Political censorship 26 May, 7pm. Defence of Literature and the Arts Society/ICA Nash House, London SW1. 85p (DLAS mems 75p) booking/details 01-930 6393

● **Organising day conference** for Yorkshire women in Bradford, 4 June. Contact Pam Brooks, 1 Blenheim Road, Bradford 8.



Learn the 3,000-year-old Chinese Art of KUNG FU for PRACTICAL SELF-DEFENCE, LASTING HEALTH and FITNESS, PERSONAL CONFIDENCE and PEACE OF MIND. Classes all over London. Visit, ring or write to: WU SHU KWAN (KUNG FU CENTRE) No.1 The Colonnades, Bishops Bridge Road, London W2 Telephone (01) 229 6354

accommodation offered

● Free accommodation offered (single room) in return for some evening baby sitting etc. Please contact Pauline Sandelson, 8 Rockfield House, Thames Street, London SE10

● Two rooms in large NW6 mixed flat for politically alive parent and child (3-6). Box 589

● Community of 18 adults, 11 children, seeks new members. Wide range of interests represented. Non self-sufficient. Craft premises also, available from August. For further information write to Birchwood Hall, Storrage, Malvern, Worcs. giving some biographical details please.

accommodation wanted

● Brighton area. Accommodation wanted for female student plus two school age kids. Anything considered. Contact Molly Hayhurst, 9 Polstead Road, Oxford. Phone Oxford 53718

● Girl 22 cat 5 and tortoise 40 looking for flat with garden in Croydon. Anyone like to help or join us. Box 582.

accommodation sharers

● Lone woman with children (7-11) seeks similar to buy jointly a large house in N. London. Separate units but share telephone, babysitting, crises, joys? Georgia Lepper, 95 Bridge Street, Wye, Ashford Kent.

● We are two people and three children who want to move away from our city based commune to set up or join, a rural commune. We have ideas for land use and projects within a small town or village. We need more people and children. We have some capital and would welcome some more. 18 Southcote Road, London N19. Jock and Carol.

work offered

● **EXPERIENCED COOK NEEDED.** Small "good food" restaurant Greenwich. Good opportunity for enthusiastic and creative person. 01-692 1618

● **COMMUNITY ACTION** (Manchester) requires workers (low wages, long hours): women/drivers preferred but not essential. Applications/job descriptions from C/A, Manchester University Students Union, Oxford Road, Manchester M13. 061-273 5111. Applications by 19 April if possible.

work wanted

● Journalist/publicist working from home seeks challenging PR account or editing assignment. Union member. Box 587

publications

● **SOCIAL REVOLUTION** — bi-monthly libertarian socialist magazine. Number 6 includes: education cuts; deschooling; no fares! Hungary; Ireland — 20p including postage from Box 23, c/o 167 King Street, Aberdeen. THE COMING AGE: Magazine of the Goddess religion. 35p. 3 Hillview Road, Oxford.

For us, Christianity and
Feminism are inseparable.

daughters of sarah

Send for free sample of
bi-monthly newsletter.

Box 102, 5104 N.Christiana,
Chicago, IL, 60625, USA

●WOMEN'S LIBERATION
LITERATURE or any books. Send
SAE for free booklist to H.
Rutovitz, 31 Royal Terrace,
Edinburgh.

●WIRES: the national WOMEN'S
LIBERATION INFORMATION +
REFERRAL SERVICE. Send us all
your information + queries. Keep in
touch with the movement: bi-
monthly NEWSLETTER subscrip-
tion group rates (2 copies) £12/
year, £3/quarter (small + poor
groups, £8, £2); individual rates
(1 copy) £5/year (£3 if poor).
Additional copies at £3/year,
£1/quarter. Cheques/POs/
donations payable to WIRES c/o
30 Blenheim Terrace, Leeds 1.
Tel. LDS 35561 ask for WIRES
(shared phone).

THE GIRLS' GUIDE - 1977
for GAY WOMEN. Annual discreet
pocket size international bar/club
guide and complete directory. This
fourth edition: 40 countries/
3000 listings; centres, switchboards,
publications, bookstores and much,
much more. £2.00 only from THE
GIRLS' GUIDE, 1 North End Rd,
London W14. Discreet mail order
only - one week delivery for all
orders. Also on sale at THE
GATEWAYS AND STERLING'S
BOOKSTORE, 57 St Martin's Lane,
London WC2.

●SAPPHO Lesbian/feminist
magazine 50p inc. post. Meetings
every Tuesday, 7.30pm Chepstow
Pub, Chepstow Place, W2.
●Old, rare, foreign and secondhand
gay books bought and sold. BM-
BREAKINGOUT London WC1V
6XX

A FREE first issue of

THE MAGAZINE Deputy FOR THE GIRL-IN-LAW

Send now to
Tilhome Limited
4 Great Queen Street
London WC2B 5DG

Name _____
Address _____

Legal Experience ☐ Yes ☐ No
No. of Years _____

WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION

The struggle for Women's Libera-
tion is worldwide - but what is life
like for women in the Soviet Union,
where equality has been an
economic and legal reality for over
50 years.

Find out for yourself. We can offer
you a subscription to **Soviet
Woman**, a well-illustrated monthly
magazine posted directly to you
from Moscow, which deals with all
aspects of the life and work of
Soviet women.

We can also offer you an interesting
new book, **Soviet Women**, which
discusses, from a soviet viewpoint,
the issues of Women's Liberation.
It includes chapters on women's
personality, the family, pre-school
education and 'forming a new
attitude to women'.

Send this coupon with your
remittance to: **CENTRAL BOOKS
LTD, 37 Grays Inn Road, London
WC1X 8PS.**

Please supply the magazine 'Soviet
Woman'

☐ 1 year £1.50 ☐ 2 years £2.25

Please supply the book 'Soviet
Women'

☐ £1.25 post free

Name _____

Address _____

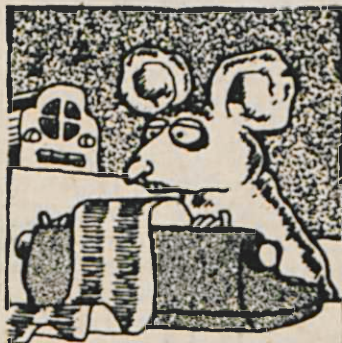
I enclose cheque/PO for £ : p.SR/1

general services

FREE PREGNANCY TESTS

Also advice on abortion,
vasectomy, female sterilisation
and fertility control. British
Pregnancy Advisory Service is a
non-profit making registered
charitable trust. Telephone
Birmingham (021) 643 1461
Brighton (0273) 509726
Cardiff (0222) 372389
Chester (0244) 27113
Leeds (0532) 443861
Liverpool (051) 227 3721
London (01) 222 0985
Manchester (061) 236 7777
Sheffield (0742) 738326

BPAS



IBM Typesetting
by Caroline MacKechie
Litho Design/Paste-up/Illustration
by J. Edward Barker
105 Golborne Road, London W10
Telephone 01-969 5083
Good rates for alternative publications

●VAL and TRUCK. Removals
for women. North London. 01-
272 4060

●GARDENING maintenance and
landscaping by qualified and
experienced women. Phone Lex
01-602 8519

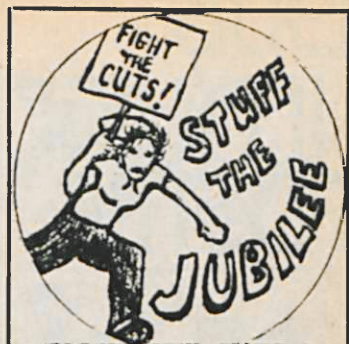
travel.

LIFT EXCHANGE CENTRE
arranges contact between people
needing/offering lifts UK/abroad
and regular London commuting.
01-834 9225 (petrol sharing basis)

for sale



Oriental
Rugs & Kelims
BOUGHT - SOLD -
EXCHANGED
Stall outside Duke of
York, Church Street,
Edgware Road.
Saturdays only.
Students of Oriental
Carpets especially
welcome. Details:
01-267 1841
after 6pm.



FIGHT THE CUTS & STUFF THE JUBILEE!

BADGES 20p each incl. post
10 for £1.50, 100 for £13.50
post free

MONEY GOES TO SAVE
SOCIALIST WORKER
PRINTSHOP from SAVAGE
FINES & COURT COSTS
of 4 current libel suits.

CASH with orders to:
Sherrl Yanowitz
116 Fortune Green Road
London NW6



A pack of 10 Spare Rib cards and
envelopes available at 30p.

If you want to join or start a group, find work, a travel companion,
or a missing friend, start a household or share a house, have some-
thing to sell or swap . . . then run your own Classified Ad.

COPY DATE 5 MAY FOR PUBLICATION 25 MAY

Rates: 10p per word, 15p caps, £1.50 for semi-display (semi-boxed
ad), 50p for Box Number.

Payment: Ads must be prepaid by cheque or PO. Make payable to
SPARE RIBS LTD. Send to: SPARE RIB CLASSIFIED,
27 CLERKENWELL CLOSE, LONDON EC1R 0AT.

Conditions: Spare Rib reserves the right to refuse any classified ads.

☐ Tick if Box Number required. ☐ Tick if Semi-Display required.

I enclose £ for no. of issues.

NAME

ADDRESS

TEL

Print your ad below in block capitals, one word in each box.
Underline any words you require in caps. PLEASE SEND LARGE
STAMPED ENVELOPE FOR A BOX NO

7		
10		
13		
16		
19		
22		
25		
28		
31		
34		

1908 SUFFRAGE POSTER



First published by The
Brighton and Hove
Women's Franchise
Society in 1908.

£1

Send cash, PO's, cheques to:
Spare Rib Posters,
27 Clerkenwell Close, London EC1.
Make out cheques to Spare Ribs Ltd.

centres

● **A Woman's Place** 42 Earham St (01-836 6081). Open 10am-10pm weekdays and 10am-6pm Saturdays. Feminist information centre and meeting place. Books, publications, weekly newsletter (10p per copy or 15p by post), posters, women's group list, referral services, coffee and talk. Run by open collective which meets Tuesdays 7.30pm.

● **RIGHTS OF WOMEN (ROW)** national legal resource centre run by women. For individuals + organisations trying to extend + enforce women's rights. **FREE LEGAL ADVICE SERVICE** especially for problems of sex discrimination, employment, matrimonial + welfare issues. 7-9pm Wednesdays, 2 St Paul's Road, London N1. Write, call in or phone 01-359 6656

● **WOMEN'S RESEARCH & RESOURCES CENTRE** is an information exchange, library and meeting place for people doing research on women and feminist concerns. Their bi-monthly newsletter lists and reviews latest publications, seminars and meetings held by them and others, and the latest gives details of women's studies courses running in Britain. Sub. annually £5, or what you can afford, WRRRC, 158 North Gower St, London NW1. Tel. 01-388 0882.

therapy/growth

● **Primal therapy** in community environment send personal details 13 Canterbury Crescent SW9

● **WOMAN PSYCHOTHERAPIST** (Jungian) tel 01-348 5593 preferably before 10am

wanted

● **COLLECTOR OF BUTTON BADGES** (social, ecological, political, women's movement) seeks fellow collector or anyone with badges they don't want. Box 583

● Anyone interested in writing about creches etc. phone Sue 01-254 2227.

● **JOAN JONES** - Record of Rape - set for publication - donations badly needed - gratefully received. Send to Joan Jones, PO Box 90, London N10 1BH.

● Are you dissatisfied with the school system? My daughter 14 and I would like to meet others to work out alternatives Surrey-London area. Ring Pat Cobham (Surrey) 4943.

groups

● Anyone interested in forming a group in Rotherham area contact Rotherham 73630.

● **BARNET** anyone interested in starting women's group ring Sue 01-449 3951 after 5pm.

● Any feminists interested in forming an Education group in Romford/Ilford area please contact Sue at Hornchurch 55766.

● **Gay Medics/dentals/students**, and health workers. Social and discussion group. Interested? Write, Gay Medics Group, University of London Union, Malet Street, London WC1

● **A Self Help Group** is being formed in Clapham, dealing with free pregnancy testing and discussion groups. Any interested women please phone Francis or Sue on 622 7885 for more details.

personal

● Intellectual lively affectionate lesbian lady seeks unattached similar, permanent partnership. Humberside area. Share flat anywhere. Genuine. Box no. 581

● Seeking companion for cycle touring on continent approx. 6 weeks beginning mid-May. Call Leah (031) 228-1743.

● I want a woman to holiday with between July 23rd and August 20th. Somersaulting in the Pyrenees? I'm not gay. Ring Fiona 01-730 7554.

● Continental guy 27, new to the UK, seeks friends for conversation and exchange of views. I'm living in London and interested in modern theatre and community work. Box 584

● Young man broadminded with sense of humour seeks similar woman for communion of mind and body. Edinburgh area. Box 585

● Would American guy like to marry British lady? Please write with phone no. Box 586

● Male, 31, healthy wealthy and dull, seeks girlfriend. Vasectomised. Ideal pet for liberated woman. Bristol. Box 588

contacts

● **NATIONWIDE** female only contacts; very private and confidential. Please send SAE for prompt reply to "Ariadne" The Golden Wheel, Liverpool L15 3HT.

messages

● Pam Pickford where are you? Phone Sue Gilbert, Milton Keynes 565424

The TASS Guide to What They Say. Number One.



This is the employer with the Low Paying Record

"You might think
you're doing
broadly the same
work as him.
I don't!"

"Women doing broadly the same work as men should be paid the same." So says the Equal Pay Act. But saying is one thing, paying is another. Employers have had years to regrade, reclassify and reorganise jobs to avoid this. And if your boss says no, where does that leave you?

You could start a legal battle.

Difficult, uncertain and possibly expensive for a woman alone.

Or you can join TASS.

We are the union for all staff in engineering. Our women's membership is growing faster than any other staff union.

Our policy is simple.

Men's Pay for Women. And we don't just say that, we make it work.

We have a spectacular record in equal pay negotiation.

If you want the benefit of our strength and expertise contact Judith Hunt, our National Women's Organiser. Better still, have a word with your local TASS representative.

TASS

Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers
Technical Administrative and Supervisory Section
Head Office
Onslow Hall, Little Green, Richmond, Surrey TW9 1QH
Telephone 01-948 2271

h.
1

5

1.

r-

1

5

A Girl's Best Friend

Angela McRobbie and Eve Brooke talked to girls on a Birmingham council estate. They wanted to know if things had changed since the 1960s when they were in their teens. Is there still a gap between the relationships girls feel they ought to have and the relationships they really enjoy?

Thirteen-year-old best friends in East Finchley, London



"The most important thing is to decide which kind of 'no' you want to say. There is, for instance, the 'no-never' and the 'no-not-yet'; the 'no-go-away' and the 'no-come-back-later'."

PETTICOAT, MARCH 19 1966

"To begin with going out with a boy on your first date doesn't automatically mean kissing. As you get to know each other better, you'll become more relaxed; instead of dreading a good-night kiss, you'll actually come to look forward to it. And if it's a shy hesitant kiss to begin with, there's nothing wrong in that. Just enjoy yourself and stop worrying."

JACKIE, MARCH 2 1974

Life in our teens in the 1960s meant one thing — boys, how to get, and more important, keep one. Words such as "sexual object" and "sexism" did not exist and we were unable to articulate our dissatisfaction, but we were aware of something farcical in our situation. Although time, energy and money were spent outdoing other girls in the beauty stakes, we do think we caught on to the absurdity and humiliation of it all, and some kind of female solidarity emerged in spite of our supposed rivalry. Our best friend meant more to us than any boy.

Each week we went to the local youth-club dance. One corner would be reserved for us to wait, half hoping that this would be our enchanted evening, and that some dashing Prince Charming would pick us out of the crowd. Yet we felt uncomfortable, vulnerable and joked about the corner where we stood, calling it the "cattle market" and "the place where the Christians get thrown to the lions", but still we stood there.

Our resentment couldn't be voiced but it created resistance which took the form of cynicism and being as exploitative as we could towards the boys exploiting us. The moment of pay-off inevitably came and in some semi-public place we had to make the usual decision — "how far to go" as Petticoat called it. Not that Petticoat's advice was any help at the time. The only real help came from our best friend — the only person we could talk to about our sexual and emotional lives.

The women's movement has made a vast difference by giving us a vocabulary with which we can analyse our past lives. We wondered whether feminist ideas had reached today's teenage girls. Are they involved in the same rituals? Do they face the same sexual dishonesty that we did, or is the media right — is every 14-year-old girl on the pill? Finally, is a best friend still the only stable, trusting relationship a teenage girl can rely on? We talked with 13- and 14-year-old

girls from a Birmingham council estate. Without being condescending or putting ourselves in an "authority" or "expert" role, which we were unwilling to do, we could get the girls to say very little about their feelings. We believe the following only scratches the surface of what they really think and feel.

The way the girls "look" says a lot about their lives. Sexiness of the type depicted in *19*, *Honey* and *Cosmopolitan* is not a quality the girls want. They prefer a "neat, pretty" image. Plunging necklines or bra-lessness is considered "loose". Instead, they wear mid-calf skirts, shirt tops and terrifyingly high platform shoes. Tomboyishness is also unpopular; only a handful at the youth-club we visited wore trousers, and all of these were "dressy", made of crease-resistant pastel coloured fabric. Jeans would be considered "scruffy". The ideal is clean and wholesome like the models in the fashion pages of *Jackie* and *Melanie*. This is partly related to financial dependence on parents — good denim jeans now cost about £10 and it's difficult to get shoes much cheaper. Several girls had part-time jobs and others devise all sorts of schemes to keep up to date with their particular fashions. Jill is 15, she describes how she organises her finances:

"I get £2.50 a week for babysitting four nights a week for this woman who's got two children. I look after them from 8.30 to 11.30 and she goes out to work. It keeps me going on cigarettes and money for school. I don't get many clothes — I like the same things, platforms, mid-calf length skirts, lots of tops and blouses — usually all from 'Chelsea Girl'."

Wendy has a different system:

"I get £1.50 from me mum, and she buys me school clothes — then if I want something, and it's not near me birthday or Christmas, I go round all me relatives, visiting them and that. I can collect about £3 to £4 and me dad puts the rest to it."

Girls who realise they will never make magazine standards of beauty work at developing their personalities in ways they are told will be attractive to boys.

"Make your personality your greatest asset, smile and look interested, a sullen face never looks pretty," *Jackie*, problem page advice.

The "girls area" still seems to exist at discos; the girls spend the entire evening in small groups, chatting and dancing together, rarely approached by any boy until the last dance when the lucky ones "get off" with someone and the others slowly saunter home together, stopping off at the chip shop. But getting off with a boy often poses more problems than it's worth:

"Well it's like this you know, if you go out with a boy once and say you'll see him again, he gives you a week. If you haven't performed by then, he throws you over. If you have, he still does but he gives your telephone number to all his friends." Jill, aged 14.

"Yeah, and for weeks on end you get boys phoning up looking for you and you

haven't even heard of them — it's never happened to me mind." Susan, aged 13. "It happened to a girl down our way and she got ever so big-headed, came into school every day saying, guess who phoned me up last night. It was a shame, everyone knew why, they all knew what the boys were after." Jill.

Another girl spelt out the issues even more clearly:

"Well it's not fair. I mean it's OK for them isn't it? I mean they can go about with as many girls as they like. They boast to their friends about the girls at school they've had — when it isn't true. But they'll still get girls to go out with them. It seems to make them even more popular, especially if they're good looking." Karen, aged 14.

One of their greatest fears is "getting a name for yourself" which leads to isolation and being ignored by the other girls:

"I had to stop going around with Pam when she got known for being like that. I didn't go out for six weeks, stayed in with me mum and watched television."

It's often irrelevant whether these allegations are based on fact; they are usually instigated by the boy to bolster his confidence. The way the girls accept the rumours and penalise the girl in question, indicates their fear and sense of powerlessness. We heard about one girl who had a particularly bad time — the others were very antagonistic towards her:

"Beverley — she's a proper one — I wouldn't go around with her that's for sure. Everybody down our way knows about her — even me mum's told me not to go about with her. She'll give it anyone and afterwards the boys don't want to know her — they all pack her in."

Each week she danced quite alone, only the leaders and an occasional boy spoke to her. The girls called her a tart and looked the other way when she passed. We were told that this had been going on for several months and that it had happened before — usually the girl in question eventually stopped coming to the club.

Faced with all these difficulties, a girl's most important relationship is not with a boy but with her best friend. The best friend twosome has many characteristics of the boy-girl romance; it's fraught with the same kind of tensions and tends to be long lasting. This is demonstrated by an incident related to us at length by one of the girls involved:

"Well, it's a long story. You see me and Chris have gone about for years, you know. But last summer when she was away on holiday I started going about with Lesley, she lives two doors down. I couldn't tell Chris about it and she didn't go to the youth club 'cause she lived further away. Anyway, then when we went back to school she kept asking me to come over to her's in the evening and I said I was staying in to do me homework, and all the time I was going up to the club with Lesley. Then she found out. The other girls at school told

“If you haven't performed by then, he throws you over. If you have, he still does but he gives your telephone number to all his friends.”

“I'd rather go about with Maggie any day. I mean if you just go about with a boy, you lose all your friends.”

her. First she started to cry, then me and then Lesley as well. Everybody in the school knew about it. You see I didn't mean to hurt Chris, it was just that I had a good laugh with Lesley. Me mum said we were all mad. But then I decided just to go back with Chris. It's funny I don't even say hello to Lesley when I walk past her — I promised Chris I wouldn't.”

It wasn't easy to untangle the genuine emotional turmoil from the exciting melodrama, but it did seem to illustrate just how important the best friend relationship is to the girls.

Rarely were they as frank as this; in general the girls were reluctant to discuss their friendships and were surprised that they should be of interest to anybody else. There was also a strong element of defensiveness which occasionally turned into antagonism against outsiders. “Fed up” or “pissed-off” they retreated into the protective shell of best

friendism, refusing to have anything to do with the youth leaders at the club, boys, us and even other girls. On other occasions they were pleased to talk about their friendships, describing how they last years, and although always focussed round the idea of boys, were in fact only broken at a later stage by the arrival of a steady, rather than casual boy friend.

“Well, if I had to choose between a boy and me mate, I'd choose her anytime. You know, all they're interested in is if you'll give it to them — and when you don't they pack you in. I mean they always pack the girl in, never the other way round.

“I've been out with four boys in the last six months — none for more than a week. Right now I'm going out with Pete but I don't know how long it'll last. I mean really they're more interested in their mates anyway. I wouldn't give it him — Pete that is. I don't want to get pregnant and have a kid. I'd rather go about with Maggie any day. I mean if you just go about with a boy, you lose all your friends.” Debbie, aged 15.

Until girls start to go steady they occupy a kind of twilight area, directed towards boys, yet based on best friends; knowledgeable about sex in theory, aware of the pill and its availability, yet scarcely in a position to put this knowledge into practice. Sex is a matter of furtiveness and fumbling, guilt, fear and humiliation. Even at 13 and 14 the girl is a sex object — for experimentation

in the “healthy” development of boys. If she enters into this activity with anything but timidity, and trepidation, she is branded an easy lay. All the knowledge in the world about the pill is of little use when the real problem is how to look attractive without having to confront what this attractiveness means in direct sexual terms.

The women's movement is failing to make any impact on the day-to-day life of teenage girls — certainly of working class girls. Feminist teachers are trying to organise discussion groups and inviting women speakers, but then the difficulty lies in getting the girls to talk openly and freely about their experiences. Until the girls have contact with the ideas of the women's movement, say through feminist youth leaders, their only defence against sexism remains the best friend. Shirley sums it up:

“I'd much rather go about with Alison than with any of the boys. We have a good laugh. One weekend I go to hers for the night, the next she comes to mine. We stay up talking for hours — sometimes all night. And we see each other every day at school. She's cleverer than me so we're in different classes but we have lunch and break together. Then at night we go to the youth club. Usually we don't do much there, just sit about, listening to records. In the summer we hang about the streets. We've been on a double-date once or twice, but it's really better being just with girls, you know.”

more letters

enable those who prefer to work in other areas of production to pursue this from a more independent position (more cash) and under more favourable circumstances (easing the burden of the two jobs), and it will put us in a stronger position to struggle more effectively against the exploitation of our labour, and form the basis for concretely uniting both men and women in the battle against that exploitation.

5 Socialised housework — laundries, nurseries, etc. — ease the burden of housework, they do not replace it. They represent improvements in working conditions, but they don't do our job for us. And the women who work in them are as exploited as those they ‘liberate’. Capital uses these facilities to lure us into accepting more readily a second job — when they need us. Then when it suits them they throw us back into housework where they don't have to pay us. Even in the socialist countries, where female liberation has gone farthest, they have got caught in the trap of “incorporating women into work” — as if housework is not a vital part of production.

6 To oppose the idea of Wages for Housework by saying the State will not grant it is like opposing the demand of slaves for freedom on the basis that the plantation owners are not likely to agree. It is up to the slaves and all those

who understand the justice of their cause to wage the necessary struggle.

7 The State does not have to turn to the pockets of our fellow-workers in order to finance our just demands. Let the State turn instead to those who deprive us of the fruits of our labour.

Yours for Progress
Joan French
St Catherine, Jamaica

Selling Ourselves

Dear Spare Rib,

I read the report on the P.R.O.S. campaign (SR 56) with some surprise, which deepened to unease after further reflection on the ethical issues involved. I am not concerned with sexual morality, whatever that may be, but rather I do not believe that prostitution is justifiable from a feminist point of view. Whilst sympathising with the women in P.R.O.S. in their fight against the discriminatory harassment they undoubtedly experience, I cannot help feeling that as long as women are prepared to sell themselves for the selfish gratification of the male then we shall never destroy the common illusion that woman was basically provided for man's convenience. Is there really no other way to feed the kids that will not compromise what the rest of us are struggling to achieve? To suggest that officially designated “areas of assignation where customers and prostitutes could meet” should be set up is tantamount to

saying that prostitution is an essential social service, an old myth which merely panders to the androcentric nature of our exploitative society. Sure, it is not the individual prostitutes who should be blamed, but for them to expect wholehearted feminist support for their cause suggests to me a double standard as unacceptable as that of their clients.

Yours sincerely
Sarah Ward
Ashford, Kent

The Only Lesbian on Earth

*Dear sisters,
The letter in SR 56 “No more yukky ads” made us feel very angry and upset. The writer seems to have very little understanding of lesbian oppression. One of the fundamental things about it (and gay oppression generally) is that we are invisible; sexuality, unlike gender or race, is not something that can be seen (if you are gay you do not have a green nose). What this, coupled with the fact that we are all brought up to believe that there is only one form of sexuality — heterosexuality — means, is that many lesbians are totally isolated from each other and you can live out your life believing you are the only lesbian on earth.

Added to this is the way in which society, if it does mention homosexuality (and here also it normally only mentions men;

women don't have a sexuality so how can they be lesbians?), does so by talking about homosexuality as an ‘illness’, a ‘disease’, an ‘abnormality’, something sub-human. If it does depict gays it does so in stereotyped ways, e.g. screaming, limp-wristed effeminate men, big butch women wearing tweeds, brogues and talking in a husky voice. So for most gays this is the only image to identify with.

All gays are isolated (a few of us have managed to meet in less-defined, more supportive situations — we are the exceptions). So it isn't surprising that most of us see ourselves in a role, a stereotype. But how are people to change? Certainly not by writing high-handed letters telling them they are not quite sussed out enough for a feminist publication. Perhaps if *Spare Rib* were to write it should be to give her the address of her nearest lesbian or women's group.

Yes, of course when we choose women as our lovers it's because they are women and not male-substitutes. A butch woman is a woman not a man, that is fundamental. As a woman (butch or not) she will have none of the social power of a man, but will have the oppression of all women and all lesbians; she will be a lesbian woman who sees herself as butch. In the ad the sister was stating she wanted friendship with a woman. Yours in sisterhood
Char, Ferg, Jean, Helen
Nottingham Women's Liberation

ERICA JONG

HOW TO SAVE YOUR OWN LIFE

The dazzling, irreverent successor to *Fear of Flying* that continues the disastrous, erotic and happy adventures of Isadora Wing.

"So cheerfully outrageous, so determinedly, engagingly tell-all, that even readers of the earlier book will be left with their senses reeling at times."

Publishers Weekly

To be paperbacked by
Panther in 1978.

320 pages

£3.90

**Secker &
Warburg**

pcl

The Polytechnic of Central London

SCHOOL OF COMMUNICATION
CULTURAL & COMMUNITY STUDIES UNIT

Women & Medicine

A WEEKEND CONFERENCE
FRIDAY 20th MAY (EVE) AND
SATURDAY 21 MAY (ALL DAY)
PORTLAND HALL, 18-22 RIDING HOUSE STREET,
LONDON W1 (OXFORD CIRCUS TUBE)

Sessions on:

The Provision of Women's Clinics and Services
Childbirth: New Approaches and Methods
The Menopause and Hormonal Replacement Therapy

Workshops on:

Woman as unpaid Health Worker
Women in the Medical Profession
The overcoming of difficulties in sexual relationships
Policy for family planning and abortion

Conference Organiser: Irene Brennan
Fee £4.00

Further details/enrolment:

Short Course Administrator (C.&C.S.), Short Course Unit,
Polytechnic of Central London, 309 Regent Street,
London W1. 01-580 2020 ext 221.

FILM AND SEXUAL POLITICS

Keele University Adult Education

A residential summer school at the University of Keele,
13-20 August 1977

We will study the recent growth of interest in the way films depict women, men and sexual relations, using a wide range of films and extracts.

Tutor: DR RICHARD DYER Fee: £40.00

Details and enrolment forms from:

Adult Education, The University, Keele, ST5 5BG
Tel: 0782 71 313

Spare Rib Banned in Eire! What next?

The Defence of Literature and the Arts Society believes that being opposed to censorship is not the same as liking all the results, but it does mean that you believe it is a greater obscenity not to be allowed to make up your own mind.

Opposed to censorship?
Then join us!

The Defence of Literature and the Arts Society: 18 Brewer Street, London W1. Membership fee £2.

RED

Issue 12 now ready.
Looks at the limits of
Leninism... lesbianism...
consciousness... coping...
changing...

30p. Supplies and subscriptions
(£1.50 for 4 issues, £2 sustaining
sub) from 22 Murray Mews,
London NW1.

RAG

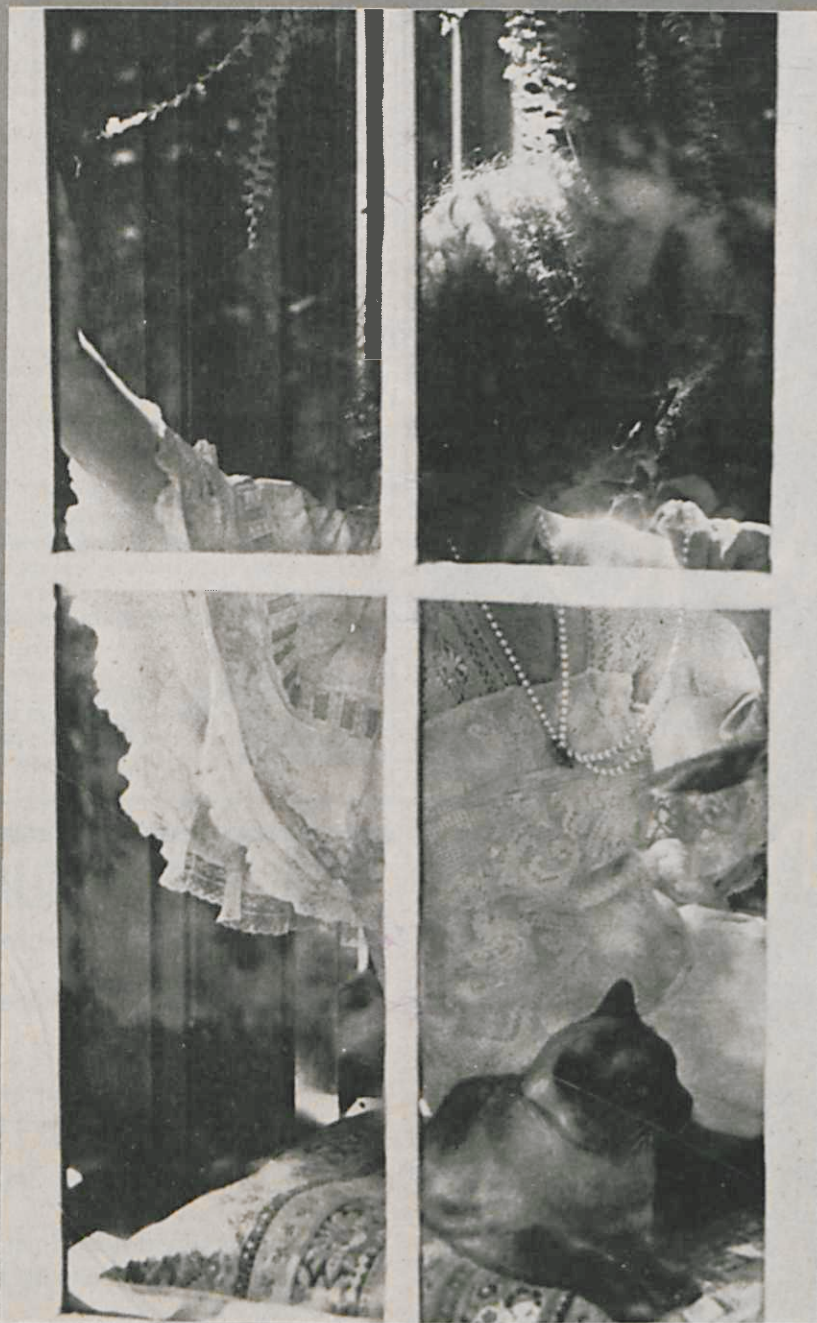
DORY PREVIN on tour

"Her music is evocative, clever, atmospheric"

"A stunning truth rises from all her songs, and a wry sense of humour"

"She is darn nearly an inspiration for many women. Her style is so personal"

"When I first realised I had nothing left to lose, I realised I had nothing left to hide"
-Dory Previn.



TOUR DATES

MAY

17th Tuesday	Old Grey Whistle Test
19th Thursday	Dublin
20th Friday	Belfast
22nd Sunday	Usher Hall, Edinburgh
23rd Monday	Free Trade Hall, Manchester
24th Tuesday	Colston Hall, Bristol
26th Thursday	Leeds University
28th Saturday	Royal Albert Hall, London
29th Sunday	New Theatre, Oxford
31st Tuesday	Winter Gardens, Boumemouth

JUNE

1st Wednesday Dome, Brighton



'Dory Previn'
K56066



'We're Children
of Coincidence
And Harpo Marx'
K56213

Available on  Records and Tapes

reviews

BOOKS

ELEANOR MARX

The Crowded Years

1884-1898

by Yvonne Kapp

(Lawrence & Wishart

£12.00)

Eleanor Marx was the youngest daughter of Karl and Jenny Marx and this is the second volume of Yvonne Kapp's celebrated biography. The first, *Family Life*, brilliantly recreated the Marx's home with its intense political atmosphere, constant money problems, births, marriages, deaths, theatricals, police spies, visitors from all over Europe and the range and depth of Marx's intellectual world.

This book covers Eleanor Marx's life from 1884 when she set up with Edward Aveling, a married man separated from his wife who remained her partner till her suicide at the age of 43. Aveling shared her political convictions. He helped her and Engels translate and edit the mass of material left by Marx (after his death) and together they toured England and America giving lectures on Socialism, writing articles, and propagandising for the international socialist and working class movement. They were both interested in the theatre and organised readings of Ibsen or Shakespeare for their friends and political comrades.

They reviewed and spoke on the 'Woman Question', believing that sexual relations would automatically improve when women's economic dependence on men ceased under socialism. "How is it," they wrote, "that our sisters bear upon their brows this stamp of lost instincts, stifled affections, a nature in part murdered?" They insisted, following Engels, that it was women's economic position which was the cause of their inferior status; this was partly a desire to dissociate themselves from the so-called bourgeois feminists who concentrated on civil and legal equality, ignoring the class



Eleanor Marx

system and the plight of working class women. Though perhaps a reasonable emphasis at that time, Ms Kapp's contempt for the women's liberation movement of the 1970s confuses the many strands of feminism. "Then as now, ladies who became a little over excited about their wrongs and apt to tip out the baby — most particularly the baby — with the bathwater, paid less attention to economic discrimination as the basis of women's inferiority than to the social and civil oligarchy, not to mention the domestic tyranny of men, now called male chauvinism."

Even during Eleanor Marx's own lifetime (as Sheila Rowbotham has shown in a study of Edward Carpenter, *Socialism and the New Life*, soon to be published by Pluto Press), there were groups of socialists who believed that the domestic tyranny did indeed spring from capitalist economic relations but that simply removing the

structures of this system would not deal with the intricate internalisation of women's psychological and emotional inferiority, resulting from centuries of domination by men in all areas of life — intellectual, sexual, political and economic. There were far more women and men experimenting with new forms of personal relationships as part of their socialist practice than historians have acknowledged or bothered to find out about. Ms Kapp's insistence on Eleanor Marx's uniqueness as a female political activist in this period simply ignores the evidence now emerging from the work of feminist historians.

Most important of all, Ms Kapp's stoical socialism seems to me to distort her understanding of Eleanor Marx's personal predicament. Part of the sadness of this second volume is the obvious loneliness felt by Eleanor Marx after her parents' deaths, when she ceased to be part of a

large loving family, despite her friendships and her attachment to Engels, who partially replaced her father as an emotional and political centre to her life. She had no children of her own though she loved children, and even though she shared much of her political life with Aveling, her emotionally barren relationship with him finally overwhelmed her. Yvonne Kapp (to the obvious relief of the many male reviewers) is anxious to exonerate Aveling, who everyone at the time blamed for her suicide. Ms Kapp claims that it was Engels' death and with it the decline of his and Marx's particular kind of socialist movement that caused the crisis which finally led to her taking her own life. But political setbacks alone do not usually drive socialists to suicide — if they did the history of socialism would be littered with them. Anyone reading the last desperate letters that Eleanor Marx wrote when Aveling, after many affairs, confronts her with his secret marriage to a much younger woman and threatens desertion, must be struck by her sexual and emotional humiliation.

This biography has been widely acclaimed and I found it a fascinating study of a complex political woman. But for feminists and socialists alike *The Crowded Years* remains flawed by Ms Kapp's failure to incorporate a feminist critique into her traditional socialist perspective.

Jean McCrindle

FATHERS COME FIRST

by Rosita Sweetman

(Pan 70p)

This delightful novel charts the rake's/heartbreak's progress of Liz, from Dublin home to convent school to modelling classes to fashion jobs to studying to waitressing. Few of us travel in straight and confident lines to our heart's desire, and this is what this novel's all about — the confusion and anguish propelling Liz through self-hate and competitiveness to energy for skirmishing with the world. Her route is signposted by men, and by the conflicting messages she receives about them.

reviews

The novels she reads tell her: "Today's girl is tall and slim; she moves with the casual grace of a wild animal." The nuns tell her: "If it weren't for our souls we'd be just wild animals." The magazines tell her: "They ran into the bedroom and fell on each other like wild animals." Liz juggles with all these notions of herself during her love-affair with the rakish Colin, who makes marvellous wild love to her and who believes in freedom. His freedom, not hers. In the end Liz is sadder and wiser and Colin

is back on the roller-coaster with someone else.

Liz makes a real woman-friend for the first time when she desperately needs support, meeting Mary, a colleague of Colin's, older and more independent than herself. But the character of Mary is too idealised to be human; she serves mainly as a mouthpiece for feminist ideas.

Despite this one weakness, *Fathers Come First* tells Liz's story with freshness, ease, humour and sympathy.

Michele Roberts

THE AMAZON OF LETTERS

The Life and Loves of Natalie Barney

by George Wickes
(W H Allen £5.95)

This book is a disappointment on two counts. Natalie Clifford Barney, whose biography it is, was a 'legendary' figure in Paris both during the Edwardian era and between the wars. Openly and notoriously a lesbian in an age when this was accounted more scandalous than it is today, she also held a literary salon for 60 years, and her friendships with famous writers such as Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, Bernard Berenson, indeed all the stars of that firmament, were not more numerous than her many love affairs, with Renee Vivien, Romaine Brooks, Colette, etc. Her charm and charisma were famous and she should have been — and was — portrayed in many novels, among them *The Well of Loneliness*. She tried her hand at writing, but carelessly, and it was always second to her major work of art, which was her life. Several times this rather repetitive book likens her to Oscar Wilde in this respect, quoting his famous epigram on the subject: "I've put my genius into my life; I've only put my talent into my work." A mere pedestrian biography of such a woman, unless in itself of exceptional literary quality, which this is not (although it is pleasantly written), is bound to be a disappointment, because, being true, it is so much less than all the heightened fictional recreations. One of the few descriptions that really comes alive is in fact Truman Capote's and he sees Natalie from within his own distinctive imagination. As Janet Flanner, another American ex-patriate of the age,

said: "Miss Barney is a perfect example of an enchanting person not to write about."

Secondly, the book is disappointing as a book about a famous lesbian and proselytiser of lesbianism. Yet what should one have expected from such a book? Perhaps that her life and its celebration of lesbianism would act as some sort of example for one's own life. Yet on the contrary, as becomes quite clear from this rather monotonous narrative, to be an 'out' gay does not of itself make homosexuality subversive. On this subject the biographer quotes a young American woman researcher whom he met while working on this book. She pointed out that at the beginning of the century Natalie Barney was putting forward ideas which now form part of the thought of the gay liberation and even the women's liberation movements. Yet her life only serves to illustrate the limitations of the demands 'Come out' and 'Gay is good'. The young American also accuses Natalie Barney of having men as friends and women only as lovers, so perhaps we can only say that her life simply illustrates many of the problems we still face today, and especially of how we as women can form truly validating relationships with other women.

Most disappointing of all, this book makes Natalie's long life of bohemian luxury, of passionate sexual love and intrigue and of literary refinement, seem faded and rather dull. During one of her last salons, in May 1968, Natalie Barney ignored the sounds of students rioting nearby, and this biographer makes her life seem somehow irrelevant to our age, which perhaps it is. Combined with privilege and divorced from politics, the sexual liberation of a few individuals seems relatively unimportant.

Elizabeth Wilson

FILMS

CROSS OF IRON

Directed by Sam

Peckinpah

A violent war film coming from Sam Peckinpah is no surprise and normally would not be worth critical mention except for the pretensions of this film.

Cross of Iron tries unsuccessfully to fit into the genre of anti-war war films and in the process is disturbingly offensive. It attempts to show the human side of war — how the virtues of camaraderie and a sense of duty keep the little guy from demoralisation under gruesome wartime conditions.

Just to make sure we get the point that this film is about the universal man, the characters are in a German Battalion on the Russian Front, led by James Coburn (Corporal Steiner), and have a fine disregard for Nazi ideology and Prussian discipline. Yes, they really are good guys underneath, and Peckinpah continually reminds us of this through the predictable war-time clichés — for example, the obligatory hospital scene when a feverish Coburn hallucinates about the horrors of war.

Unfortunately for the viewer, the hospital is not the last stop for Coburn. After all that good German beer and sausage and a few screws from a sympathetic nurse, our hero marches out onto the battlefield to blow more Russians sky high in geyser-like fountains of blood. The shelling occasionally lets up to allow Coburn to exhort his men to greater heroics.

The battalion chances upon an outpost of Russian soldiers guarding a small bridge. But these soldiers are women, much to the amusement of the men.

Coburn orders the women to undress and trade uniforms with his men. A young recruit is left to guard the women as another soldier is enticed to a barn by a Russian with flashing eyes. Put off his guard by the flirting women, the young soldier is knifed — a reward for his innocence.

Meanwhile, in the barn, the Russian woman is brutally forced to have oral sex with the German. With one quick bite she castrates him. As he falls to the floor screaming he manages to smash her head in with his rifle. Coburn administers justice by setting

the now undressed women upon the rapist-murderer.

This scene is particularly disturbing as it is representative in the extreme of Hollywood's new treatment of women. The impact of the women's liberation movement has disturbed fantasies of submissive women. But the appearance of a strong woman is interpreted as a physical and explicitly a sexual threat to men. The impact of this is minimised by transforming the strong woman into a sex symbol.

The Russian women are the only Russians to be shown in the film. The enemy is otherwise never depicted, merely shown as depersonalised tanks advancing relentlessly. This objectifying of the enemy is one of the film's most effective devices. But traditionally women are an integral part of war films; in the sexual battlefield as well, soldiers must dominate the enemy. Peckinpah knows sexual violence is better box office than merely throwing a grenade at a tank.

Tira Shubart

ABOUT TIME

by The London Women's Film Group

A street corner, a bus-stop. A shopping-laden housewife misses the bus and starts to wait for the next one, frustrated by the waste of her time. The dreariness of the scene is familiar and pointed.

She is joined in the queue by four other women: a nurse, a secretary, a factory worker and a lesbian waitress. The film is *About Time*, made by the Women's Film Group and the Wages for Housework Campaign, shown at the Wages for Housework Mothers' Day Rally in London on March 20. As we listen to the conversation and the private thoughts of the waiting women, we learn that it is 'about time' that all women received wages for housework from the government.

The women's descriptions of their lives are movingly set off by the dreariness of the street corner and the long wait. "If you have a job and a child and any sense of yourself, you are a walking triangle," says the nurse. The similarity between women's paid and unpaid work is shown; as are the connections between women's oppression at work and at home. "People never like to pay much for what they get at home for free," points out the underpaid

waitress. When a woman walks by with a wages-for-housework badge on, they discuss it and agree that only if paid for their housework would they be free to refuse it, or properly rewarded if they chose to do it.

The trouble with the film — as with the WFH campaign itself, in my view — is that you cannot at first make out quite what it is saying, and when you do you cannot quite believe your ears. That no-one should have to be a full-time housewife, but that women who choose to should not be penniless dependents seems to me elementary; to leap from there to saying that 'the government' must pay 'wages for housework' to all women (and men too, but they must campaign for it themselves), housewives or not ('all women are housewives') is something

else. After all, if what the campaign is really about is just 'lots more money for everybody' no-one will disagree, but the original slogan becomes superfluous.

The waitress character complains that her pay is so low that she has to do the 'housework' of smiling and flirting with customers to get good tips. But this isn't an argument for wages for smiling and flirting, it's an argument for better pay for waitresses. If 'wages for housework' is seen as a metaphor for general improvement in women's working and living conditions, the film becomes more comprehensible. But I think we are meant to take it literally.

Zoe Fairbairns

Available from The Other Cinema, Tottenham Street, London W1.

Durex at her friends.

"You've never grown up, have you," Ellie, the genteel one, reproves her.

"Never!" snorts Gertie, and pings it gleefully.

In a series of funny-bitchy conversations, well-oiled with tea and sherry, their history and relationships unfold.

There's nothing cosy here, instead there's vast affection, vicious competitiveness and bitter humour. And at times there's a solidarity in oppression nurtured by Katie, the kindest one.

Stung by the jibes of the independent, rootless Gertie, Ellie flaunts her womanly status: "I've a home, I've married, I've everything a woman could want." She digs and delves until Gertie's dark and disreputable spinster's secret is revealed — the birth and adoption of an illegitimate son. "Whose was it?" she demands.

"Mine," says Gertie firmly. But when Ellie continues to ferret mercilessly for the father, she cites Ellie's husband — the 'sterile' Fred.

It becomes clear that the women cope with their shared predicament as Welfare State discards in very different ways. Gertie survives on anger and cocky humour — she toasts the post-war Labour government and the 1947 National Health Act for "providing us with beds to be geriatric in". Ellie protects herself by pretensions and one-upmanship — she's got Fred, after all, and only five mortgage payments to go before they are fully fledged house owners. But eventually even she is enraged by the discovery that Fred gets more pension money than she does, and makes a symbolic bid for control over her life by getting a job as a lollipop woman. Meanwhile Katie, underneath her good humour and gentle supportiveness, is slowly disintegrating. She has been forcibly retired from her job in a haberdashery shop. Her life is emptying, and in response she underlines the process by selling her furniture, stick by stick, and stays at home in her empty house.

But although this very funny and accessible play shatters our stereotypes of old women, there are moments of crisis and emptiness in the characters' lives which it evades, veering constantly back to comedy. For instance, when Gertie tells Ellie "I had your son," Ellie hardly reacts. Even 40 years after the event, I don't believe she would have been so distanced. And it's a pity that the character of Meg, the young waitress, remains so shadowy.

There were possibilities of showing solidarity and conflict across the generations which were not really developed, and Meg was never more than a foil for the jokey dialogue of the others. The real drama began and ended with the old wives and their tale.

Alison Fell

The play lasts approximately 45 minutes; copies of the script can be obtained from Michelene Wandor, 71 Belsize Lane, London NW3. Send large sae.

THE DOUBLE SHIFT

Counteract

The Double Shift is a show with music and songs on childcare and under-fives. The play shows the problems facing Anne, a young working mother who is told she may lose her nursery place now that her husband is back at work. And it exposes the conditions that nursery workers generally have to cope with — short-staffed, under-equipped, long hours, authoritarian matrons, and possible cuts.

The play is very ambitious. It tries to deal with all aspects of care for under-fives: the tensions that exist between workers and parents; between workers and matron; between different types of under-fives workers (child-minders, play-group workers, nursery teachers, nursery nurses and students). It discusses why childcare is still seen as women's work, undervalued and underpaid, and offers an analysis of "problem families".

At the same time the play attempts an economic analysis of the cuts and the general political situation since the war. Whilst I felt it was necessary to have some analysis of the cuts and in particular how they relate to women, I did feel that to continually return to the capitalist on the top of his ladder was pretty tedious and unnecessary. If the economic analysis had been kept fairly short and had more emphasis been put on the everyday life situations, it would have been more enjoyable and effective.

Although the play may not be brilliant theatrically, and people who've seen a lot of agit-prop theatre may be disappointed, the important thing for those of us working with under-fives is that at last there's a play with which we can closely identify. We saw the play in a community centre in Islington, London, with a large number of under-fives workers in the audience who really enjoyed

PLAYS

THE OLD WIVES TALE

by Michelene Wandor

Three old ladies in a tea-room... a sight predictably cosy, dreary. As sex objects these three are past it — Macbeth's witches are the only roles

they'd be offered on stage, and in the real world they wouldn't even retain the status of the dreadful.

Three old ladies in a tea-room... sticking moons and stars on their witches' hats; they're off to their drama club rehearsal. Someone's left a Durex under the ashtray.

"A tip, maybe?" quips Gertie, sparrow-faced under a denim cap, and waves the



— funny-bitchy conversations, well-oiled with tea and sherry.

it. It is particularly relevant to those of us working in nurseries, and it's very useful propaganda for people involved in campaigns or union issues around the cuts or childcare.

of the changes suggested in these discussions.

Jill Hughes

exhibitions by organising their own. A group like this can share the difficulties of locating the right space and finding money to transport their work, to insure it, install it and print a catalogue. This is the group's second exhibition. Each time they've chosen a public, accessible site, a library and a theatre rather than an art gallery.

But the title of the exhibition, 'The World as We See It', leads visitors to look for a unifying factor, a reason why these artists should be showing

The group, founded in 1975, say they are aiming "to present an un-romantic view of life". Although a shared perception isn't obvious in the show itself, works reproduced in the catalogue nearly all illustrate oppression of one sort or another.

Charlotte Yeldham's introduction to the catalogue also suggests that social concern and empathy are characteristics common to all women's art. She writes, "Feminist art theory has stressed the human and sympathetic nature of women's art and its social application, at the same time rejecting 'cold abstraction' but it has done this chiefly in the

THE WORLD AS WE
SEE IT

panels, to Halina Korn's sculptures, Hilda Bernstein's etchings of South Africa, satirical work by Gertrude Elias and Monica Sjoö's canvases on feminist themes — abortion, goddess worship, sisterhood.

A black and white photograph of a person in a dark, hooded robe standing on a cobblestone path. The person's face is pale and appears to be in a state of distress or death, with their mouth open. The background is a dense, textured wall of cobblestones.



The excess calories taken in America would feed the entire population of England, or one-tenth of India's people, or several of the underfed countries in Africa.

Spare Rib 44

context of feminist art which portrays the experience of women to the exclusion of other groups. This exhibition suggests that a feminist art theory may be applied to a broader spectrum of women's art."

This gives the impression that there is a coherent body of feminist art theory and a general agreement as to what constitutes feminist art. In fact there are wide differences of opinion. For example women artists, including abstract artists, with no feminist message in their work consider that their attitude towards their work, the way they work and their relations with other women artists constitute the feminism in their work. Others insist that unless art is agitational and consciousness-raising it's not feminist.

And to talk about "the human and sympathetic nature of women's art" suggests that there is a universal female aesthetic or sensibility. Such

generalisations risk creating new stereotypes and ignore the fact that women artists develop their work within a male culture. At the moment perhaps all we can do is to look at an individual's work within a specific context and ask how her work reflects her own experience; to look, for example, at the different interpretations male and female Impressionists made of the same subject matter.

The exhibition's attempt to draw parallels between diverse work like Liz Moore's light filled landscapes or absorbing portraits, Gertrude Elias' black critiques of the medical/psychiatric establishment, and Mary Wolfard's intricate embroidered animals is confusing and detracts from the strengths of the individual pieces.

Rozsika Parker

Swiss Cottage Library until April 27.

Enquiries to Gertrude Elias, 16 Agincourt Road, London NW3. Tel: 01-267 1058.



"I earnestly trust that though the thrill and glamour of war are over, the spirit of self sacrifice and helpfulness which it kindled will not wane in the coming days," wrote Queen Mary to the women of the Empire at the armistice in 1918.

WOMEN AT WAR

The exhibition now at the Imperial War Museum, London, until October 30th shows very clearly the Establishment's view of women at war 1914-18. How women who'd been fighting for the vote were manipulated into fighting the Hun, first by sending their men to the slaughter and then themselves being harnessed to the war machine.

Amongst the amazing photographs depicting heroic women, as well as the badges, baubles, uniforms (on 1970's fashion models), moving letters and personal effects, there's an extraordinary film - *Mrs John Bull Prepared*. It was put out in cinemas everywhere by the Ministry of Information in 1919 as a tribute to women's war work. Jibing at the (middle class) Edwardian father, it shows how individual women received "the call" from a pre-Raphaelite angel, dropped their idle gossip, roses, performing dog or suitor and took up the challenge, in this case making sheepskin jackets fit for the hero.

Certainly there were dramatic changes. Women were released from the home for the

sake of national efficiency, back to the land, and into new work, canteens, typewriters, nursing, the auxiliary services of the armed forces. Demanding equal pay 800,000 were recruited into the engineering shops in 1915-16, only to be pushed straight out again as soon as the war was over.

Every effort is made to show how the war emancipated women, much emphasised in Arthur Marwick's book, *Women at War 1914-1918*, which is full of records from all social classes, recently dug out of the museum's archives, and published by Fontana at £2.50 to coincide with the exhibition. But what impressed me much more was the over-riding conservatism of the government's propaganda. With slogans like "The Food Question is a Woman's Question", "Queen Mary's Army Auxiliary Corps - the girl behind the man behind the gun", and even from Mrs Pankhurst, "Women Demand the Right to Serve", it's not that surprising that by 1921 the proportion of women in paid employment was smaller than before the war. A just reward perhaps for Queen Mary's "sisterhood of suffering and service".

Rose Ades

BOOKS for children

AFTER ROOTS

TO RAVENSRIFF

by Hester Burton

(OUP £2.95)

THE SLAVE DANCER

by Paula Fox

(Piccolo 45p)

MAROON BOY £1.95

BESS £2.95

THE WHITE HORSE £3.50

by Robert Leeson

(all published by Collins)

THE FIRST OF MIDNIGHT

by Marjorie Darke

(Kestrel £3.50)

The past few months have seen a sudden spate of books for children on slavery. They express different aspects of our changing consciousness about slavery and also the role of women and ordinary people in history.

Paula Fox's *The Slave Dancer*, just out in paperback, was one of the first to take the slave trade as a serious theme. Jessie, a white boy from New Orleans, is seized and carried aboard a slave ship. His job is to play his pipe, to 'dance' the slaves and keep them fit. The story is powerfully told and full of the tensions and hatreds of life on board ship, punctuated with the brutal realities of sailors' lives in the 1840's. The slaves' own suffering is mainly

described in order to illuminate aspects of the white boy's conscience - and Jessie's life is changed forever by his experiences on the ship - we only learn the name of one of the slaves at the end of the book.

In the same tradition Hester Burton's *To Ravensriff* also treats the theme of slavery as a statement of the white liberal conscience by involving some of her characters in the Abolitionist Movement of late 18th century England. Emmie hides an escaped slave in her aunt's house and her success in helping him to escape brings her face to face with society's injustice and her own power to act to change it. But these exciting possibilities are quickly submerged in Burton's romantic intrigue about Emmie's parentage and in Romantic Love - "she would always be lost and rootless if James did not take her by the hand and guide her through the maze of life". But Burton does touch interestingly on Liverpool's economic involvement in the slave trade.

The White Horse is the final volume of a splendid historical trilogy by Robert Leeson. The books are worth reading in order since they trace a Portsmouth family's (the Mortens) history through three generations from the beginning of the slave trade in Elizabethan times to the Civil War. Leeson's

treatment of slavery differs from the others as he writes from the point of view of Black oppression. In *Maroon Boy* Matthew helps slaves to escape from their slave ship and goes to live with them. His half-sister (Bess), a Portsmouth businesswoman and adventurer, manages to find him and she falls in love with his Cimaroon

companion Akenoro. Their child Matthew (*The White Horse*) rides with Cromwell's cavalry but finally finds his way back to the Caribbean to rejoin the Cimaroons (the society of escaped slaves). Leeson's canvas is picaresque and eventful, his characters and their times powerfully welded together by solid

reviews

historical background and convincing dialogue. By including black people as characters in their own right and by describing not only the suffering and torment of slavery, but the rebellions and the founding of the Cimaroon communities, Leeson forces the reader to recognise the part slaves played in their own liberation.

Marjorie Darke (author of *The First of Midnight*) demonstrates her continuing commitment to the role of women in history (her previous *A Question of Courage* dealt with the suffragette movement). This latest book is set in the Bristol of the late 1800's and has a vigorous and forceful heroine in Poorhouse girl Jess who escapes the servitude of her own existence to help a black slave Oludah (Midnight) to escape his. The arrival of Jess and Oludah's baby at the end of the book promises an exciting sequel with a sure sense of time and place. Bristol's dependence on the slave trade and the grotesque 'respectability' of its rich citizens are finely drawn.

Rosemary Stones
Children's Rights Workshop



3-Piece Suit

WATCH OUT

3-PIECE SUITE
(BBC2)

★ The publicity build-up to *3-Piece Suite* promised great things. It was to be an innovation in the light-comedy field, but this proved to be the usual portent of disaster. The reasons for its failure are varied: many could be applied to any comedy show — bad writing and some poor support acting — but the most obvious weakness is the concept of three 10-minute playlets. The use of the short sketch limits the

writing to exaggerated scene-setting and the production of one-dimensional caricatures. Apart from this, the standard of the writing from this virtually all-male team of playwrights has been generally very low.

Diana Rigg has done her desperate best to make the most of the script and some of the playlets have been mildly amusing. The weaknesses, however, are only too apparent. For example, the three playlets shown on March 22 had naive and obvious plots and the three main female characters (all played by Diana Rigg) were the usual stereotypes of whore, frustrated middle class housewife and narcissis-

tic aging actress.

It is extremely rare for good light-comedy parts to be written for women. *Sadie, It's Cold Outside*, with its portrayal of an alienated and rebellious housewife was an exception. Prunella Scales (who played Sybil Fawcett so brilliantly) suggested recently in the *Radio Times* that English male writers are mostly frightened of women and ensure that the parts they write for them represent no sexual threat: this series certainly proves her point!

Jo Wright

JUST TOMBOYS —

JUST WILLIAM

(LWT)

Dear *Watch Out*,
I am ten years old and I and my friends are keen watchers of the new TV series *Just William*. I am writing to tell you about the attitudes which are an important part of the stories. William Brown is a funny, mischievous and likeable character except for one thing. He is a male chauvinist. The tone of the *William* books is also male chauvinistic because all the girls *William* meets are soppy 'little ladies' dressed in frilly white dresses who are despised by William. So girls who like the stories and want to follow *William* very often feel that being a girl is in itself soppy. But the most amazing thing of all is that the *William* books are written by a woman. Girls who are rebellious are still often thought of and think of themselves as tomboys. But the whole idea of tomboys is sexist because girls should be able to be like that without being thought of as 'like a boy' and it is high time that idea was outdated. Yours in sisterhood,
Rosalind Kalpana Wilson
London SW11

WOMEN IN THE SOVIET UNION

The struggle for Women's Liberation is worldwide — but what is life like for women in the Soviet Union, where equality has been an economic and legal reality for over 50 years.

Find out for yourself. We can offer you a subscription to *Soviet Woman*, a well-illustrated monthly magazine posted directly to you from Moscow, which deals with all aspects of the life and work of Soviet women.

We can also offer you an interesting new book, *Soviet Women*, which discusses, from a soviet viewpoint, the issues of Women's Liberation. It includes chapters on women's personality, the family, pre-school education and 'forming a new attitude to women'.

Send this coupon with your remittance to: CENTRAL BOOKS LTD, 37 Grays Inn Road, London WC1X 8PS.

Please supply the magazine 'Soviet Woman'
□ 1 year £1.50 □ 2 years £2.25
Please supply the book 'Soviet Women'
□ £1.25 post free

Name

Address

I enclose cheque/PO for £ : p.SR/

GAY SWEATSHOP

IN

CARE AND CONTROL

A PLAY BASED ON THE EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN MOTHERS IN THEIR FIGHT FOR CUSTODY OF THEIR CHILDREN



opening dates prior to tour
for details
ring
6735992

Fulham Arts Centre
Drill Hall
Oval House

May 11 12
13 14 15 20 21 22
25 - 28

at 8
at 8
at 7-45



we're nearly five

In just a couple of months Spare Rib will be five years old and we'll be celebrating with a special bumper BIRTHDAY ISSUE!

But our survival to date and for birthdays to come really depends on your support. Because unlike the glossies we don't have pages and pages of advertising — we wouldn't want it. But it does mean we can't afford the sort of expensive publicity they can. So this is where you come in!

Please

Take out a subscription — it costs you just a little more but it ensures your monthly copy, and because you're buying direct from us more of your money goes to supporting Spare Rib.

Publicise us! Send for our free posters and stickers (25p p&p) — groups, there's room on the posters to advertise yourselves as well.

Get a 25% discount! Write or phone us on 01-253 9793 and order five or more birthday copies.

To Spare Rib Subscriptions, c/o Linda Phillips, 114 George Street,
Berkhamsted, Herts HP4 2EJ

Please send me Spare Rib for 1 year.
I enclose cheque/PO for £.....
(see sub rates)

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

Please send a 1 year Gift Subscription
of Spare Rib. I enclose cheque/
PO for £.....(see sub
rates)

Gift card should read: from

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

*Take out a subscription
for a friend.*

*Spare Rib Subscription Rates for 1
year: UK £4.44; Europe £5.00;
Elsewhere seairmail \$12.00; Elsewhere
airmail \$20.00.*

WHAT WOMEN NEED BUT COULDN'T GET TILL NOW

Whether you are single or engaged, married or divorced, legally separated, deserted or about to re-marry . . . whatever your situation 'WISP' will help.

What is 'WISP'?

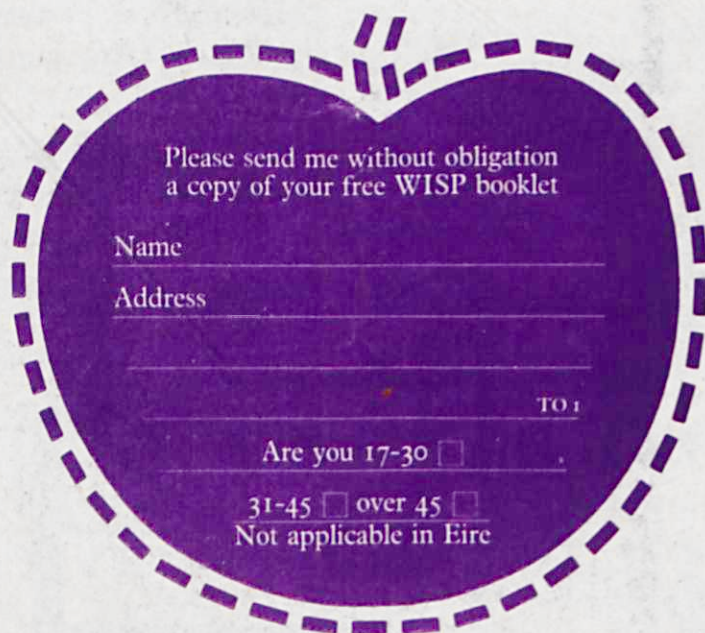
Women's Individual Savings Plan.

A comprehensive insurance-savings plan, designed by women, solely for women, with only the interests of women in mind. Something which has never existed until now.

Before you change another typewriter ribbon, nappy or your mind, send or 'phone for the free 'WISP' booklet now. It answers all the questions you didn't know who or how to ask.

For further information contact:

Dorothy Genn, Langham Life Assurance Co Ltd,
Langham House, Holmbrook Drive, Hendon NW4 2NX
Telephone: 01-203 5211



Please send me without obligation
a copy of your free WISP booklet

Name _____

Address _____

_____ TO 1

Are you 17-30 ☐

31-45 ☐ over 45 ☐

Not applicable in Eire



Women's Individual Savings Plan-it grows

Page	Title	Author	Rights
1	Cover illustration		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Cover illustration. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
4	Letters		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
5	Letters		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
6	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
7	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
7	National Women's Liberation Conference	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
8	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
8	woman at the conference		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for woman at the conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
8	woman at the conference		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for woman at the conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
			Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate

9	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
9	Older women's workshop	Webb, Caroline	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Older women's workshop. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
10	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
10	Shopping and talking - stalls with feminist literature, clothes, jewellery, candels and posters	Webb, Caroline	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Shopping and talking - stalls with feminist literature, clothes, jewellery, candels and posters. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
11	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
11	Yoga workshop	Wright, Annie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Yoga workshop. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
12	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
12	Workshop on motorcyle maintenance	Webb, Caroline	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Workshop on motorcyle maintenance. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
13	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.

13	Falling on your feet - Kung Fu workshop	Wright, Annie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Falling on your feet - Kung Fu workshop. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
14	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
14	Feminism and Socialism workshop	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
15	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
15	woman napping	Wright, Annie	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for woman napping. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
16	Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference	Spare Rib	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Women's Liberation 1977 - the National Women's Liberation Conference. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
16	Photograph		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Photograph. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
17	Tooth & Nail		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
19	Even less on research on cervical cancer	Bowman, Marion	Usage Terms: © Marion Bowman
19	Lab technicians Anne Waite and Jane Cardwell with records of the thousands of women on file for screening at Christien Hospital	Snail Graphics	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Lab technicians Anne Waite and Jane Cardwell with records of the thousands of women on file for screening at Christien Hospital. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.

20	Even less on research on cervical cancer	Bowman, Marion	Usage Terms: © Marion Bowman
20	Birth Control Clinic Firebombed	Lofquist, Vicki; DeBell, Diane	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate all the copyright holders for Birth Control Clinic Firebombed. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.; Usage Terms: © Diane Debell
20	The St Paul clinic after the arson attack		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The St Paul clinic after the arson attack. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
20	Graffiti on the clinic walls		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Graffiti on the clinic walls. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
21	Even less on research on cervical cancer	Bowman, Marion	Usage Terms: © Marion Bowman
21	Launching Herstory	Di, who lives in Paris	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Launching Herstory. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
22	Red Circle - an historical accident?	Nicholls, Jill	Usage Terms: © Jill Nicholls
22	Record Rises		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Record Rises. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
22	Striking against Yardleys ...	Anciano, Gillian	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Striking against Yardleys Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
22	Picketing for equal pay outside Yardley's, basildon		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Picketing for equal pay outside Yardley's, basildon. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
23	Skirts Still Rule	WIRES	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Skirts Still Rule. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
23	Heavy odds		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Heavy odds. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
23	Striking at Trust Houses Forte	Sheloch, Cathy	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Striking at Trust Houses Forte. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any

			information you have regarding this item.
24	I have neighter illusions nor delusions, Doc. My problem is that I exist day after day in grim realist		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for I have neighter illusions nor delusions, Doc. My problem is that I exist day after day in grim realist. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
25	Blisters	Morgan, Natasha	Usage Terms: © Natasha Morgan
25	People's Power	Charles, Barbara	Usage Terms: © Barbara Charles. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
26	Prices Protest	Owen, Jenny	Usage Terms: © Jenny Owen
26	"It would be nice to say we don't need this conference"	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
26	Women's TUC Conference	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	Len Murray	Phillips, Angela	Usage Terms: © Angela Phillips. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	"It would be nice to say we don't need this conference"	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	Bradford Witch Hunt	Brackx, Anny	Usage Terms: © Anny Brackx. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
27	Childcare Clowns		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Childcare Clowns. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
27	Knocking Back the Bitter		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Knocking Back the Bitter. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.

27	Bricked-Up Refuge		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Bricked-Up Refuge. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
28	Daffodils, Cards and Wages	Nicholls, Jill	Usage Terms: © Jill Nicholls
29	Builder Sacked for Swearing		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Builder Sacked for Swearing. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
29	Janet Krengell	Islington Gutter Press	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Janet Krengell. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
35	Illustration		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Illustration. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
36	A Girl's Best Friend	Brooke, Eve; McRobbie, Angela	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate all the copyright holders for A Girl's Best Friend. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.; Usage Terms: © Angela McRobbie. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
36	Thirteen year-old best friends in East Finchley, London		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Thirteen year-old best friends in East Finchley, London. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
37	A Girl's Best Friend	Brooke, Eve; McRobbie, Angela	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate all the copyright holders for A Girl's Best Friend. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.; Usage Terms: © Angela McRobbie. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
38	A Girl's Best Friend	Brooke, Eve; McRobbie, Angela	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate all the copyright holders for A Girl's Best Friend. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.; Usage Terms: © Angela McRobbie. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.

38	Letters		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for this item. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
41	Eleanor Marx	McCrindle, Jean	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Eleanor Marx . Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
41	Fathers Come First	Roberts, Michele	Usage Terms: © Michele Roberts. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
41	Eleanor Marx		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Eleanor Marx . Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
42	Fathers Come First	Roberts, Michele	Usage Terms: © Michele Roberts. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
42	The Amazon of Letters	Wilson, Elizabeth	Usage Terms: © Elizabeth Wilson
42	Cross of Iron	Shubart, Tira	Usage Terms: © Tira Shubart. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
42	About Time	Fairbairns, Zoe	Usage Terms: © Zoe Fairbairns
43	The Old Wives Tale	Wandor, Michelene	Usage Terms: © Michelene Wandor
43	The Old Wives Tale	Sparham, Laurence	Usage Terms: © Laurence Sparham. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
43	The Double Shift	Hughes, Jill	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Double Shift. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	The Double Shift	Hughes, Jill	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for The Double Shift. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
44	The World As We See It	Parker, Rozsika	Usage Terms: © Rosie Parker (Rozsika Parker) (deceased)

44	Art work by Hilda Bernstein	Bernstein, Hilda	Usage Terms: © Bernstein, Hilda
44	art work by Gertrude Elias	Elias, Gertrude	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for art work by Gertrude Elias. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
45	To Ravensrigg	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
45	The Slave Dancer	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
45	Maroon Boy	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
45	Bess	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
45	The White Horse	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
45	The First of Midnight	Stones, Rosemary	Usage Terms: © Rosemary Stones. This item can be used for private study, non-commercial research and educational purposes only. You may not use this work for any commercial purpose.
45	Women at War	Ades, Rose	Usage Terms: © Rose Ades
46	3-Piece Suite	Wright, Jo	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for 3-Piece Suite. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
46	3-Piece Suite		Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for 3-Piece Suite. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with any information you have regarding this item.
46	Just Tomboys - Just William	Wilson, Rosalind Kalpana	Usage Terms: We have been unable to locate the copyright holder for Just Tomboys - Just William. Please contact copyright@bl.uk with

any information you have regarding this item.